

FAMILY LECTURES;

OR, A

COPIOUS COLLECTION

OF

S E R M O N 'S,

On Faith and Practice.

COMPRISING,

IN ONE VOLUME,

MANY CONTAINED IN THE TWO FORMER,

WITH THE ADDITION OF OTHERS,

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IN RECOMMENDATION OF PAROCHIAL AND NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

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Men, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies:—Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people; wise and eloquent in their instructions:—All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times.—The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will shew forth their praise.

Ecclesiasticus xliv. 3, 4, 7, 15.

L O N D O N :

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FAMILY LECTURES:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE two former Volumes of this Collection having become extremely scarce, the Proprietors deemed it expedient to republish in ONE VOLUME, a select number of Sermons, taken from the two former, together with several others never before inserted, because not published, but calculated to obviate the Errors of the Times, and to enrich the pages of this Edition with the Piety and Wisdom of such Preachers as a HORSLEY and a PALEY.

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FAMILY LECTURES:

OR,

A COPIOUS COLLECTION

OF

S E R M O N S,

Selected from the most CELEBRATED DIVINES,

On FAITH and PRACTICE.

S E R M O N I.

By RICHARD BENTLEY, D.D.

[Preached March 7, 1691-2.]

The Folly of Atheism, and (what is now called) Deism; even with respect to the present Life.

PSALM xiv. 1.

The Fool hath said in his heart, There is no God; they are corrupt; they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

I SHALL not now make any inquiry about the time and occasion and other circumstances of composing this Psalm: nor how it comes to pass, that with very little variation we have it twice over, both here the 14th, and again number the 53d. Not that these and such like are not important considerations in themselves; but that I think them improper now, when we are to argue and expostulate with such persons as allow no divine authority to our text; and profess no greater, or, it may be they will say, less veneration for

these sacred hymns, than for the profane songs of Anacreon or Horace. So that although I myself do really believe, that all such as say in their hearts, *There is no God*, are foolish and corrupt, both in understanding and will; because I see infinite wisdom itself has pronounced them to be so: nevertheless this argument would at present have no force upon these men, till in due time and method we have evinced the sufficient authority of holy scripture. But however there are other books extant, which they must needs allow of as proper evidence; even the mighty volumes of visible nature, and the everlasting tables of right reason; wherein, if they do not wilfully shut their eyes, they may read their own folly written by the finger of God, in a much plainer and more terrible sentence, than Belshazzar's was by the hand upon the wall. (Dan. v. 5.)

And as the impious principles of these persons do preclude any argumentation from the revealed work of God; so they prevent us also from speaking at present to the second part of the text. The

whole verse hath apparently two propositions: the one denoting the folly of atheism, *The Fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*: the second declaring the corruption and flagitiousness of life which naturally attend it; *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*. Now this latter part to a genuine atheist is mere jargon, as he loves to call it; an empty sound of words without any signification. He allows no natural morality, nor any other distinction of good and evil, just and unjust, than as human institution and the modes and fashions of various countries denominate them. The most heroic actions or detestable villainies are in the nature of things indifferent to his approbation; if by secrecy they are alike concealed from rewards or punishments, from ignominy or applause. So that till we have proved in its proper place the eternal and essential difference between virtue and vice, we must forbear to urge atheists with the corruption and abominableness of their principles. But I presume, the first part of the text, the folly and sottishness of atheism, (which shall be the subject of this discourse,) will be allowed to come home to their case; since they make such a noisy pretence to wit and sagacity, and I believe several of them first engage in that labyrinth of nonsense and folly, out of an absurd and preposterous affectation of seeming wiser than their neighbours.

But before I proceed any farther, it will be necessary to clear and vindicate this expression of the Psalmist, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*. For I know not any interpreters that will allow it to be spoken of such as flatly deny the being of God; but of them, that, believing his existence, do yet exclude him from directing the affairs of the world, from observing and judging the actions of men. I suppose they might be induced to this, from the commonly received notion of an innate idea of God, imprinted upon every soul of man at their creation, in characters that can never be defaced. Whence it will follow, that speculative atheism does only subsist in our speculation; whereas really human nature cannot be guilty of the crime: that indeed a few sensual and voluptuous persons may for a season eclipse this native light of the soul; but can never so wholly smother and extinguish it, but that at

some lucid intervals it will recover itself again, and shine forth to the conviction of their consciences. And therefore they believed, that the words would not admit of a strict and rigorous interpretation; but ought to be so tempered and accommodated to the nature of things, as that they may describe those profane persons, who, though they do not, nor can really doubt in their hearts of the being of God, yet openly deny his providence in the course of their lives. Now if this be all that is meant by the text, I do not see how we can defend, not only the fitness and propriety, but the very truth of the expression. As to that natural and indelible signature of God, which human souls in their first origin are supposed to be stamped with, I shall shew at a fitter opportunity that it is a mistake, and that we have no need of it in our disputes against atheism. So that, being free from that prejudice, I interpret the words of the text in the literal acceptation, which will likewise take in the expositions of others. For I believe that the royal Psalmist in this comprehensive brevity of speech, *There is no God*, hath concluded all the various forms of impiety; whether such as excludes the Deity from governing the world by his providence, or judging it by his righteousness, or creating it by his wisdom and power. Because the consequence and result of all these opinions is terminated in downright atheism. For the divine inspection into the affairs of the world doth necessarily follow from the nature and being of God. And he that denies this, doth implicitly deny his existence; he may acknowledge what he will with his mouth, but *in his heart he hath said, There is no God*. A God, therefore a providence, was a general argument of virtuous men, and not peculiar to the Stoics alone. And again, *No providence, therefore no God*, was the most plausible reason, and the most frequent in the mouths of atheistical men. So that it seems to be agreed on all hands, that the existence of God and his government of the world do mutually suppose and imply one another.

There are some infidels among us, that not only disbelieve the Christian religion, but oppose the assertions of providence, of the immortality of the soul, of an universal judgment to come, and of any incorporeal essence: and yet to avoid the odious

odious name of atheists, would shelter and screen themselves under a new one of deists, which is not quite so obnoxious. But I think the text hath cut them short, and precluded this subterfuge; in as much as it hath declared, that all such wicked principles are coincident and all one in the issue with the rankest atheism: *The fool*, that doth exempt the affairs of the world from the ordination and disposal of God, hath said in his heart, *There is no God* at all. It was the opinion of many of the ancients, that *Epicurus introduced a deity into his philosophy, not because he was persuaded of his existence, (for when he had brought him upon the stage of nature, he made him only *mula persona* and interdicted him from bearing any part in it,) but purely that he might not incur the offence of the magistrate. He was generally therefore suspected *verbis reliquisse Deum, re sustulisse* to have framed on purpose such a contemptible paltry hypothesis about him, as indeed left the name and title of God in the world; but nothing of his nature and power. Just as a † philosopher of our own age gave a ludicrous and fictitious notion about the rest of the earth, to evade the hard censure and usage which Galileo had lately met with. For my own part, as I do not exclude this reason from being a grand occasion of Epicurus's owning a God; so I believe that he and Democritus too were compelled to it likewise by the necessity of their own systems. For seeing they explained the phenomena of vision, imagination, and thought itself, by certain thin fleeces of atoms, that flow incessantly from the surfaces of bodies, and by their subtilty and fineness penetrate any obstacle, and yet retain the exact figures and lineaments of the several bodies from which they proceed; and in this manner insinuating themselves through the pores of human bodies into the texture of the soul, do there excite sensation and perception of themselves: in consequence of this hypothesis they were obliged to maintain, that we could have no fancy or idea, or conception of any thing, but what did really subsist either intire or in its several parts. Whence it followed, that mankind could have no imaginations of Jupiter or Mars, or Minerva or Isis;

if there were not actually such beings in nature to emit those effluvia, which gliding into the soul must beget such imaginations. And thence it was, that those philosophers adapted their description of the deity to the vulgar apprehensions of those times; gods and goddesses innumerable, and all of human figure: because otherwise the conceptions of mankind about them could not possibly be accounted for by their physiology. So that if Epicurus and Democritus were in earnest about their philosophy, they did necessarily and really believe the existence of the gods. But then as to the nature and authority of them; they bereaved that Jupiter of his thunder and majesty: forbidding him to look or peep abroad, so much as to enquire what news in the infinite space about him; but to content himself and be happy with an eternal laziness and dozing, unless some rambling troops of atoms upon the dissolution of a neighbouring world might chance to awake him. Now because no Israelite in the days of the Psalmist is likely to have been so curious about natural knowledge, as to believe the being of a God for such a quaint and airy reason as this, when he had once boldly denied his dominion over the world; and since there is not now one infidel living, so ridiculous as to pretend to solve the phenomena of sight, fancy or cogitation, by those fleeting superficial films of bodies: I must beg leave to think, both that the *fool* in the text was a thorough confirmed atheist; and that the modern disguised deists do only call themselves so for the former reason of Epicurus, to decline the public odium and resentment of the magistrate; and that they cover the most arrant atheism under the mask and shadow of a deity: by which they understand no more, than some eternal inanimate matter, some universal nature, and soul of the world, void of all sense, and cogitation, so far from being endowed with infinite wisdom and goodness. And therefore in this present discourse they may deservedly come under that character which the text hath given of them, of *fools that have said in their hearts, There is no God.*

And now having thus far cleared our way; in the next place we shall offer some notorious proofs of the gross folly and stupidity of atheists.

If a person that had a fair estate in re-

* Posidon. apud Cicero, Plutarch, &c.
† Mr. Des Cartes.

version, which in all probability he would speedily be possessed of, and of which he might reasonably promise to himself a long and happy enjoyment, should be assured by some skilful physician, that in a very short time he would inevitably fall into a disease, which would so totally deprive him of his understanding and memory, that he should lose the knowledge of all things without him, nay all consciousness and sense of his own person and being: If, I say, upon a certain belief of this indication, the man should appear overjoyed at the news, and be mightily transported with the discovery and expectation; would not all that saw him be astonished at such behaviour? Would they not be forward to conclude, that the distemper had seized him already, and even then the miserable creature was become a mere fool and an idiot? Now the carriage of our atheists or deists is infinitely more amazing than this; no dotage so infatuate, no frenzy so extravagant as theirs. They have been educated in a religion that instructed them in the knowledge of a supreme being; a spirit most excellently glorious, superlatively powerful and wise and good, creator of all things out of nothing; that hath endued the sons of men, his peculiar favourites, with a rational spirit, and hath placed them as spectators in this noble theatre of the world, to view and applaud these glorious scenes of earth and heaven, the workmanship of his hands; that hath furnished them in general with a sufficient store of all things, either necessary or convenient for life; and particularly to such as fear and obey him, hath promised a supply of all wants, a deliverance and protection from all dangers: *that they that seek him, shall want no manner of thing that is good.* Psal. xxiv. 9. Who besides his munificence to them in this life; *hath so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten son* (John. iii. 16.) the express image of his substance, and partaker of his eternal nature and glory, *to bring life and immortality to light* (2 Tim. ii. 10.), and to tender them to mankind upon fair and gracious terms; that if they submit to his *easy yoke, and light burden* (Matth. xi. 30.), and observe his *commandments which are not grievous* (1 John, v. 3.) he then gives them *the promise of eternal salvation* (Heb. v. 9.) *he hath reserved for them in heaven an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and*

that fadeth not away (1 Pet. i. 4.); he hath prepared for them an unspeakable, unconceivable perfection of joy and bliss, *things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) What a delightful and ravishing hypothesis of religion is this? And in this religion they have had their education. Now let us suppose some great professor in atheism, to suggest to some of these men, that all this is mere dream and imposture; that there is no such excellent being, as they suppose, that created and preserves them; that all about them is dark senseless matter, driven on by the blind impulses of fatality and fortune; that men first sprung up like mushrooms, out of the mud and slime of the earth; and that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call soul, are only various action and repercussion of small particles of matter, kept awhile a moving by some mechanism and clock-work, which finally must cease and perish by death. If it be true then (as we daily find it is) that men listen with complacency to these horrid suggestions; if they let go their hope of everlasting life with willingness and joy; if they entertain the thoughts of final perdition with exultation and triumph; ought they not to be esteemed most notorious *fools, even destitute of common sense, and abandoned to a callousness and numbness of soul?

What, then, is heaven itself, with its pleasures for evermore (2 Tim. iv. 8.), to be parted with so unconcernedly? Is a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, (Jam. i. 12.) to be surrendered with laughter? is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. iv. 17.) too light in the balance against the hopeless death of the atheist, and utter extinction? It was a noble saying of the emperor Marcus, That he would not endure to live one day in the world, if he did not believe it to be under the government of providence. Let us but imagine that excellent person confuted and satisfied by some Epicurean of his time; that all was but atoms, and vacuum, and necessity, and chance. Would he have been so pleased and delighted with the conviction? would he have so triumphed in being overcome? or rather, as he hath told us, would he not have gone

* * * * * ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀλογοὶ καὶ ἀναισθητοὶ γίνονται. Max. Tyr. Diss. i.

down with sorrow and despair to the grave? Did I but once see an atheist lament and bewail himself; that upon a strict and impartial examination he had found to his cost, that all was a mistake; that the prerogative of human nature was vanished and gone; those glorious hopes of immortality and bliss, nothing but cheating joys and pleasant delusions; that he had undone himself by losing the comfortable error, and would give all the world to have better arguments for religion; there would be great hopes of prevailing upon such an atheist as this. But, alas! there are none of them of this temper of mind; there are none that *understand and seek after God* (Psal. xiv. 2.); they have *no knowledge* (ver. 4.), nor any desire of it; they *thrust the word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*, (Acts xiii. 46.); they willingly prefer darkness before light, and obstinately chuse to perish for ever in the grave, rather than be heirs of salvation in the resurrection of the just. These certainly are the *fools* in the text, indocil, intractable fools, whose stolidity can baffle all arguments, and be proof against demonstration itself; *whose end* (as the words of St. Paul do truly describe them) *whose end* and very hope *is destruction*, an eternal deprivation of being; *whose God is their belly*, the gratification of sensual lusts; *whose glory is in their shame*, in the debasing of mankind to the condition of beasts; *who mind earthly things* (Phil. iii. 19.), who if (like that great apostle) they were *caught up to the third heaven* (2 Cor. xii. 2.), would (as the spies did of Canaan) *bring down an evil report* (Num. xiii. 32.) of those regions of bliss. And I fear, unless it please God by extraordinary methods to *help their unbelief* (Mar. ix. 24.), and *enlighten the eyes of their understanding* (Eph. i. 18.); they will carry their atheism with them to the pit; and the flames of hell only must convince them of their error.

This supine and inconsiderate behaviour of the atheists is so extremely absurd, that it would be deemed incredible, if it did not occur to our daily observation; it proclaims aloud that they are not led astray by their reasoning, but led captive by their lusts to the denial of God. When the very pleasures of paradise are contemned and trampled on, like *pigs* cast before swine, there is small hope of reclaiming them by arguments of reason.

however, as Solomon adviseth, we will answer these *fools not according to their folly, lest we also be like unto them* (Prov. xxvi. 4.). It is expedient that we *put to silence the ignorance of these foolish men*, that believers may be the more confirmed and more resolute in the faith.

Did religion bestow heaven without any terms or conditions indifferently upon all; if the crown of life was hereditary, and free to good and bad; and not settled by covenant upon the elect of God only; such as *live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world* (Tit. ii. 12.): I believe there would be no such thing as an infidel among us. And without controversy it is the way and means of attaining to heaven, that makes profane scorners so willingly let go the expectation of it. It is not the articles of the creed, but the duty to God and their neighbour, that is such an inconsistent incredible legend. They will not practise the rules of religion, and therefore they cannot believe the promises and rewards of it.

But, however, let us suppose them to have acted like rational and serious men; and perhaps upon a diligent inquisition they have found, that the hope of immortality deserves to be joyfully quitted, and that either out of interest, or necessity.

1, And first. One may conceive indeed, how there might possibly be a necessity of quitting it. It might be tied to such terms, as would render it impossible ever to be obtained. For example, if it should be required of all the candidates of glory and immortality, to give a full and knowing assent to such things as are repugnant to common sense, as contradict the *usual* *inborn*, the universal notions and indubitable maxims of reason; if they were to believe, that one and the same thing may be and not be at the same time and in the same respect; if allowing the received ideas and denominations of numbers and figures and body, they must seriously affirm, that two and two do make a dozen, or that the diameter of a circle is as long as the circumference, or that the same body may be all of it in distant places at once; I must confess that the offers of happiness upon such articles of belief as these, would be mere tantalizing of rational creatures; and the kingdom of heaven would become the inheritance of

only idiots and fools. For whilst a man of common capacity doth think and reflect upon such propositions, he cannot possibly bribe his understanding to give a verdict for their truth. So that he would be quite frustrated of the hope of reward, upon such unpracticable conditions as these: neither could he have any evidence of the reality of the promise, superior to what he is conscious of of the falsity of the means. Now if any atheist can shew me in the system of Christian religion any such absurdities and repugnances to our natural faculties; I will either evince them to be interpolations and corruptions of the faith, or yield myself a captive and a proselyte to his infidelity.

II. Or, 2dly, they may think it is the interest of mankind, that there should be no heaven at all; because the labour to acquire it is more worth than the purchase: God almighty (if there be one) having much overvalued the blessings of his presence. So that upon a fair estimation, it is a greater advantage to take one's swing in sensuality, and have a glut of voluptuousness in this life, freely resigning all pretences to future happiness; which, when a man is once extinguished by death, he cannot be supposed either to want or desire; than to be tied up by commandments and rules so contrary to flesh and blood: *to take up one's cross, to deny himself* (Mark, viii. 34.), and refuse the satisfaction of natural desires. This indeed is the true language of atheism, and the cause of it too. Were not this at the bottom, no man in his wits could condemn and ridicule the expectation of immortality. Now what power or influence can religion have upon the minds of these men; while not only their affections and lusts, but their supposed interest, shall plead against it? But if we can once silence this powerful advocate, we shall without much difficulty carry the cause at the bar of impartial reason.

Now here is a notorious instance of the folly of atheists, that while they repudiate all title to the kingdom of heaven, merely for the present pleasure of body, and their boasted tranquillity of mind: besides the extreme madness in running such a desperate hazard after death, (which I will not now treat of,) they deprive themselves here of that very pleasure and tranquillity they seek for. For I shall now endeavour to shew, That reli-

gion itself gives us the greatest delights and advantages even in this life also, though there should prove in the event to be no resurrection to another. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* (Prov. iii. 17.).

But before I begin that, I must occur to one specious objection both against this proposition and the past part of my discourse; namely, that religion doth perpetually haunt and disquiet us with dismal apprehensions of everlasting burnings in hell; and that there is no shelter or refuge from those fears, but behind the principles of atheism.

(1.) First, therefore, I will freely acknowledge to the atheist, that some part of what hath been said is not directly conclusive against them; if they say, that before they revolted from the faith, they had sinned away all expectation of ever arriving at heaven: and consequently had good reason so joyfully to receive the news of annihilation by death, as an advantageous change for the everlasting torments of the damned. But because I cannot expect, that they will make such a shameless and senseless confession, and supply us with that invincible argument against themselves: I must say again, that to prefer final extinction before a happy immortality, does declare the most deplorable stupidity of mind. Nay, although they should confess, that they believed themselves to be reprobates, before they disbelieved religion; and took atheism as a sanctuary and refuge from the terrors of hell; yet still the imputation of folly will stick upon them: in as much as they chose atheism as an opiate to still those frightening apprehensions, by inducing a dulness and lethargy of mind; rather than they would make use of that active and salutary medicine, a hearty repentance; that they did not know the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long suffering of God (Rom. ii. 4.), and that a sincere amendment of life was never too late, *Jesus Christ being the saviour of all men* (1 Tim. iv. 10.), and a propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 Joh. v. 14.); *who came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them all* (1 Tim. i. 15.); and died for the ungodly, and his bitterest enemies (Rom. v. 6—10.)

(2.) And secondly, As to the fears of damnation; those terrors are not to be charged upon religion itself, which pro-

ceed either from the want of religion, or superstitious mistakes about it. For as an honest and innocent man doth know the punishments, which the laws of his country denounce against felons and murderers and traitors, without being terrified or concerned at them: So a Christian in truth as well as in name, though he believe the consuming vengeance prepared for the disobedient and unbelievers, is not at all dismayed at the apprehensions of it. Indeed it adds spurs, and gives wings to his diligence, it excites him to *work out his salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil. ii. 12.); a religious and ingenuous fear, that is tempered with hope and with love and unspeakable joy. But he knows, that if he fears him who is *able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matth. x. 28.), he needs not fear that is own soul or body shall ever go thither.

I allow that some debauched and profligate wretches, or some designing perfidious hypocrites, that are religious in outward profession, but corrupt and abominable in their works, are most justly as well as usually liable to these horrors of mind. It is not my business to defend or excuse such as these; I must leave them, as long as they keep their hardness and impenitent hearts, to those gnawing and excruciating fears, those whips of the divine Nemesis, that frequently scourge even atheists themselves. For the atheists also can never wholly extinguish those horrible forebodings of conscience. They endeavour indeed to compose and charm their fears, but a thousand occasions daily awaken the sleeping tormentors. Any slight consideration either of themselves, or of any thing without; whatsoever they think on, or whatsoever they look on; all administer some reasons for suspicion and diffidence, lest POSSIBLY THEY MAY BE IN THE WRONG; and then it is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Heb. x. 31.): *There are they in great fear*, as it is in the 5th verse of this psalm, under terrible presages of judgment and fiery indignation. (Heb. x. 27.) Neither can they say, that these terrors, like tales about spectres, may disturb some small pretenders and puny novices, but dare not approach the *vere adepts*, the masters and rabbies of atheism. For it is well known both from ancient and modern ex-

perience, that the very boldest of them, out of their debauches and company, when they chanced to be surprised with solitude or sickness, are the most suspicious and timorous and despondent wretches in the world: and that the boasted happy atheist in the indolence of body, and an undisturbed calm and serenity of mind, is altogether as rare a creature, as the *vir sapiens* was among the stoics; whom they often met with in idea and description, in harangues and in books, but freely owned that he never had or was like to exist actually in nature.

And now as to the present advantages which we owe to religion, they are very conspicuous; whether we consider mankind, (1.) separately, or (2.) under society and government.

1. And first, in a single capacity. How is a good Christian animated and cheered by a steadfast belief of the promises of the gospel; of an everlasting enjoyment of perfect felicity, such as after millions of millions of ages is still youthful and flourishing and inviting as at the first? no wrinkles in the face, no grey hairs on the head of eternity; no end, no diminution, no satiety of those delights. What a warm and vigorous influence does a religious heart feel from a firm expectation of these glories? Certainly this hope alone is of inestimable value; it is a kind of anticipation and pledge of those joys; and at least gives him one heaven upon earth, though the other should prove a delusion. Now what are the mighty promises of atheism in competition with these? let us know the glorious recompences it proposes: utter extinction and cessation of being; to be reduced to the same condition, as if we had never been born. O dismal reward of infidelity! at which nature does shrink and shiver with horror. What some of the learnedest † Doctors among the Jews have esteemed the most dreadful of all punishments, and have assigned for the portion of the blackest criminals of the damned; so interpreting Tophet, Abaddon, the vale of slaughter, and the like, for final excision and deprivation of being: this atheism exhibits to us, as an equivalent to heaven. It is well known, what hath been disputed among schoolmen to this effect. And it is an

† Vide Pecockii Notas ad Fortian Mosis, p. 158, &c.

* Cic. Plutarchi, &c.

observation of Plutarch, * that the generality of mankind, πάντες καὶ πάντες, as well women as men, chose rather to endure all the punishments of hell, as described by the poets; than part with the hope of immortality, though immortal only in misery. I easily grant, that this would be a very hard bargain; and that, not to be at all, is more eligible, than to be miserable always: our Saviour himself having determined the question; *Wo to that man, by whom the son of man is betrayed; good were it for that man, if he had never been born* (Matth. xxvi. 24.) But however thus much it evidently shews, that this desire of immortality is a natural affection of the soul; it is self-preservation in the highest and truest meaning; it is interwoven in the very frame and constitution of man. How then can the atheist reflect on his own hypothesis without extreme sorrow and dejection of spirit? Will he say, that when once he is dead, this desire will be nothing: and that he that is not, cannot lament his annihilation? So indeed it would be hereafter, according to his principles. But nevertheless, for the present, while he continues in life (which we now speak of) that dusky scene of horror, that melancholy prospect of final perdition will frequently occur to his fancy; the sweetest enjoyments of life will often become flat and insipid, will be damped and extinguished, be bittered and poisoned by the malignant and venomous quality of this opinion.

Is it not more comfortable to a man, to think well of himself, to have a high value and conceit of the dignity of his nature, to believe a noble origination of his race, the offspring and image of the great king of glory: rather than that men first proceeded, as vermin are thought to do, by the sole influence of the sun out of dirt and putrefaction?

Is it not a firmer foundation for contentment and tranquillity, to believe that all things were at first created, and are since continually ordered and disposed for the best, and that principally for the benefit and pleasure of man: than that the whole universe is mere bungling and blundering; no art or contrivance to be seen in it; nothing effected for any purpose and design; but all ill-favourably cobbled

and jumbled together by the unguided agitation and rude shuffles of matter?

Can any man wish a better support under affliction, than the friendship and favour of omnipotence, of infinite wisdom and goodness; that is both able and willing, and knows how to relieve him? Such a man can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him (Phil. ix. 13.) he can patiently suffer all things with cheerful submission and resignation to the divine will. He has a secret spring of spiritual joy, and the continual feast of a good conscience within, that forbid him to be miserable. But what a forlorn destitute creature is the atheist in distress? He hath no friend in extremity, but poison or a dagger, or a halter or a precipice. A violent death is the last refuge of the Epicureans, as well as the Stoics. This says Lucretius, is the distinguishing character of a genuine son of our sect, that he will not endure to live in exile, and want and disgrace, out of a vain fear of death; but dispatch himself resolutely into the state of eternal sleep and insensibility. And yet for all this swaggering, not one of a hundred of them hath boldness enough to follow the direction. The base and degenerate saying of one of them is very well known, † That life is always sweet, and he should still desire to prolong it; though, after he had been maimed and distorted by the rack, he should lastly be condemned to hang on a gibbet.

And then, as to the practical rules and duties of religion: as the miracles of our Lord are peculiarly eminent above the lying wonders of demons, in that they were not made out of vain ostentation of power, and to raise unprofitable amazement; but for the real benefit and advantage of men, by feeding the hungry, healing all sorts of diseases, ejecting of devils, and reviving the dead: so likewise the commands which he hath imposed on his followers are not like the absurd ceremonies of pagan idolatry, the frivolous rites of their initiations and worship, that might look like incantation and magic, but had no tendency in their nature to make mankind the happier. Our Saviour hath enjoined us a reasonable service (Rom. xii. 1.); accommodated to the rational part of our nature. All his laws are in themselves,

* Plutarch, *De Stoicis*, &c. p. 1104, 1105. edit. Reiske.

† *Mecænas apud Senec. Ep. ci. Debilem facito manu, debilem pede, coxa, &c.*

abstracted from any consideration of recompence, conducing to the temporal interest of them that observe them. For what can be more availing to a man's health, or his credit, or estate, or security in this world, than charity and meekness, than sobriety and temperance, than honesty and diligence in his calling? Do not pride and arrogance infallibly meet with contempt? Do not contentiousness and cruelty and study of revenge seldom fail of retaliation? Are not envious and covetous, discontented and anxious minds tormentors to themselves? Do not we see, that slothful and intemperate and incontinent persons destroy their bodies with diseases, their reputation with disgrace, and their families with want? Are adultery and fornication forbidden only by Moses and Christ? or do not heathen lawgivers punish such enormities with fines or imprisonment, with exile or death? It was an objection of * Julian the apostate, that there were no new precepts of morality in our religion: *Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*. Why all the world, says he, is agreed about these commandments; and in every country under heaven, there are laws and penalties made to enforce all the ten, excepting only the Sabbath and the worship of strange gods. We can answer him another way; but he may make our infidels ashamed to complain of those ordinances as hard impositions, which the sense of all nations has thought to be reasonable: which not only the philosophers of Greece and Italy and the learned world, but the banians of Mogul, the talapoins of Siam, the mandarins of China, the moralists of Peru and Mexico, all the wisdom of mankind have declared to be necessary duties. Nay, if the atheists would but live up to the ethics of Epicurus himself, they would make few or no proselytes from the Christian religion. For none revolt from the faith for such things as are thought peculiar to christianity; not because they must *love and pray for their enemies* (Matth. v. 44.), but because they must not poison or stab them; not because they must not *look upon a woman to lust after her* (ver. 28.), but because they are much more restrained from committing the act. If wanton glances and lascivious thoughts had been

permitted by the gospel, and only the gross act forbidden; they would have apostatized nevertheless. This we may conjecture from what † Plato and others have told us, that it was commonly *ἐκτρέφοντο καὶ ἐνὶ δυνάμει*, (immoderate affections and lusts), that in the very times of paganism induced men to be atheists. It seems their impure and brutal sensuality was too much confined by the religion of those countries, where even Venus and Bacchus had their temples. Let not therefore voluptuous atheists say all the fault of their sins upon the infirmity of human nature; nor plead that flesh and blood cannot resist those temptations which have all their force and prevalence from long custom and inveterate habit. What enticement, what pleasure is there in common profane swearing? yet neither the fear of God nor of the law will persuade men to leave it. It is prevailing example that hath now made it fashionable, but it hath not always been so, nor will be hereafter. So other epidemical vices, they are rise and predominant only for a season, and must not be ascribed to human nature in the lump. In some countries intemperance is a necessary part of conversation; in others sobriety is a virtue universal, without any respect to the duties of religion. Nor can they say that this is only the difference of climate, that inclines one nation to concupiscence and sensual pleasures; another to blood-thirstiness and desire of revenge. It would discover great ignorance in history, not to know that in all climates a whole people has been over-run with some recently invented or newly imported kind of vice, which their grandfathers never knew. In the latest accounts of the country of Guiana, we are told that the eating of human flesh is the beloved pleasure of those savages: two nations of them by mutual devouring are reduced to two handfuls of men. When the gospel of our Saviour was preached to them they received it with gladness of heart; they could be brought to forego plurality of wives: though that be the main impediment to the conversion of the East Indies. But the great stumbling block with these Americans, and the only rock of offence, was the forbidding them to eat their enemies: that irresistible temptation made them quickly

* Julianus apud Cyrillum, p. 134.

† Plato de Legib. lib. x. p. 826. edit. Steph.

to revolt and relapse into their infidelity. What must we impute this to ? to the temperature of the air, to the nature of the soil, to the influence of the stars ? Are these barbarians of man-eating constitutions, that they so hanker after this inhuman diet, which we cannot imagine without horror ? Is not the same thing practised in other parts of that continent ? Was it not so in Europe of old, and is it not now so in Africa ? If an eleventh Commandment had been given, *Thou shalt not eat human flesh* ; would not these cannibals have esteemed it more difficult than all the ten ? And would not they have really had as much reason as our atheists, to plead the power of the temptation, and the propensity of flesh and blood ? How impudent then are the atheists, that reduce the easy and gracious conditions of the gospel, as unreasonable and tyrannical impositions ? *Are not God's ways equal, O ye children of destruction, and are not your ways unequal ?*

II. Secondly and lastly, For the good influence of religion upon communities and governments, *habemus confidentes viros* ; it is so apparent and unquestionable, that it is one of the objections of the atheist, that it was first contrived and introduced by politicians, to bring the wild and straggling herds of mankind under subjection and laws. *Out of thy own mouth shalt thou be judged, thou wicked servant* (Luke xix. 22.) Thou sayest that the wise institutors of government, souls elevated above the ordinary pitch of men, thought religion necessary to civil obedience. Why then dost thou endeavour to undermine this foundation, to undo this cement of society, and to reduce all once again to thy imaginary state of nature, and original confusion ? No community ever was or can be begun or maintained, but upon the basis of religion. What government can be imagined without judicial proceedings ? and what methods of judicature without a religious oath ? which implies and supposes an omniscient being, as conscious to its falsehood or truth, and a revenger of perjury. So that the very nature of an oath (and therefore of society also) is subverted by the atheist ; who professeth to acknowledge nothing superior to himself, no omnipresent observer of the actions of men. For an *atheist to compose a system of

politics is as absurd and ridiculous, as Epicurus's sermons were about † *sanctity and religious worship*. But there was hope, that the doctrine of absolute uncontrollable power and the formidable name of Leviathan might flatter and bribe the government into a *toleration of infidelity*. We need have no recourse to notions and supposition ; we have sad experience and convincing example before us, what a rare constitution of government may be had in a whole nation of atheists. The natives of ‡ Newfound-land and New France in America, as they are said to live without any sense of religion, so they are known to be destitute of its advantages and blessings ; without any law or form of community ; without any literature or sciences or arts : no towns, no fixed habitations, no agriculture, no navigation. And it is entirely owing to the power of religion, that the whole world is not at this time as barbarous as they. And yet I ought not to have called these miserable wretches a nation of atheists. They cannot be said to be of the atheist's opinion ; because they have no opinion at all in the matter : They do not say in their hearts, *There is no God* ; for they never once deliberated, if there was one or no. They no more deny the existence of a deity ; than they deny the Antipodes, the Copernican system, or the *Satellites Jovis* : about which they have had no notion or conception at all. It is the ignorance of those poor creatures, and not their impiety : their ignorance as much to be pitied, as the impiety of the atheists to be detested and punished. It is of mighty importance to the government to put some timely stop to the spreading contagion of this *pestilence that walketh by day*, that dares to disperse its cursed seeds and principles in the face of the sun. The fool in the text had only said in his heart, *There is no God* : he had not spoken it aloud, nor openly blasphemed, in places of public resort. There is too much reason to fear, that some of all orders of men, even magistracy itself, have taken the infection : a thing of dreadful consequence and most imminent danger § Epicurus was somewhat wiser than ordinary, when he so earnestly advised his disciples against mad-

† Ἠπὶ ὁσιότητος, Laert. De sanitate et de pietate adversus Deos. Cicero.

‡ De Laet, p. 34, 47, 50. Voyage du Sieur de Champlain, p. 28, et 93.

§ Plutarch, Ἀσπίς βιωτικῆς. Lucret. &c

* Hobbes de Cive, Leviathan.

dling in public affairs: He knew the nature and tendency of his own philosophy; that it would soon become suspected and odious to a government, if ever atheists were employed in places of trust. But because he had made one great rule superior to all, That every man's only good was pleasure of body and contentment of mind; hence it was that men of ambitious and turbulent spirits, that were dissatisfied and uneasy with privacy and retirement, were allowed by his own principle to engage in matters of state. And there they generally met with that fortune, which their master foresaw. Several cities of * Greece that had made experiment of them in public concerns, drove them out, as incendiaries and pests of commonweals, by severe edicts and proclamations. Atheism is by no means tolerable in the most private condition: but if it aspire to authority and power; if it acquire the command of an army or a navy; if it get upon the bench or into the senate, or on a throne: What then can be expected, but the basest cowardice and treachery, but the foulest prevarication in justice, but betraying and selling the rights and liberties of a people, but arbitrary government and tyrannical oppression? Nay, if atheism were once, as I may say, the national religion; it would make its own followers the most miserable of men: it would be the kingdom of Satan divided against itself; and the land would be soon brought to desolation. † Josephus, who knew them, hath informed us, that the Sadducees, those Epicureans among the Jews, were not only rough and cruel to men of a different sect from their own; but perfidious and inhuman one towards another. This is the genuine spirit and the natural product of atheism. No man that adheres to that narrow and selfish principle, can ever be just or generous or grateful; ‡ unless he be sometime overcome by good nature and a happy constitution. No atheist, as such, can be a true friend, an affectionate relation, or a loyal subject. The appearance and show of mutual amity among them, is wholly owing to the smallness of their number, and to the obligations of a faction. It is like

the friendship of pickpockets and highwaymen, that are said to observe strict justice among themselves, and never to defraud a comrade of his share of the booty. But if we could imagine a whole nation to be cutpurses and robbers; would there then be kept that square dealing and equity in such a monstrous den of thieves? And if atheism should be supposed to become universal in this nation, (which seems to be designed and endeavoured, though we know the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail, farewell all ties of friendship and principles of honour; all love for our country and loyalty to our prince; nay, farewell all government and society itself, all professions and arts, and conveniences of life, all that is laudable or valuable in the world.

May the Father of mercies and God of infinite wisdom reduce the foolish from their errors, and make them wise unto salvation; confirm the sceptical and wavering minds, and so prevent us, that stand fast, in all our doings, and further us with his continual help, *that we may not be of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* Amen.

SERMON II.

By RICHARD BENTLEY, D.D.

[Preached October the 3d, 1692.]

A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Frame of the World.

ACTS xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

ALL the arguments that can be brought, or can be demanded, for the existence of God, may, perhaps not absurdly, be reduced to three general heads: the first of which will include all the proofs from the vital and intelligent portions of the universe, the organic bodies of the various animals, and the immaterial souls of men. Which living and understanding substances, as they make incomparably the most considerable and noble part of the naturally known and visible creation; so they

* Plineus: *Ὁρα δὲ πόλεις ἤσαν.* Cicero, *Atheismus*, *Blasph.* &c.

† Josephus de *Bello Judaico*, l. ii. c. 12.

‡ Si sibi ipse consentiat, et non interdum naturæ bonitate vincatur. *Cic. de Offic.* 1. 2.

do the most clearly and cogently demonstrate to philosophical enquirers the necessary self existence, and omnipotent power, and unsearchable wisdom, and boundless beneficence of their Maker. This first topic therefore was very fitly and divinely made use of by our Apostle in his conference with philosophers and that inquisitive people of Athens: the latter Chap. xvii. 2.) *spending their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing*; and the other, in nothing, but to call in question the most evident truths that were delivered and received of old. And these arguments we have hitherto pursued in their utmost latitude and extent. So that now we shall proceed to the second head, or the proofs of a Deity from the inanimate part of the world; since even natural reason, as well as holy Scripture, assures us, (Psal. xix. 1.) *that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*; (Jer. li. 15.) *that he made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding*; (Psal. cxlviii. 5, 6.) *that he commanded, and they were created*; *he hath also established them for ever and ever*; (Psal. cxlvii. 8.) *he covereth the heaven with clouds, he prepareth rain for the earth*, (Psal. lxxv. 11.) *he crowneth the year with his goodness*.

These reasons for God's existence, from the frame and system of the world, as they are equally true with the former, so they have always been more popular and plausible to the illiterate part of mankind; insomuch as the * Epicureans, and some others, have observed, that men's contemplating the most ample arch of the firmament, the innumerable multitude of the stars, the regular rising and setting of the sun, the periodical

and constant vicissitudes of day and night, and seasons of the year, and the other affections of meteors and heavenly bodies, was the principal and almost only ground and occasion that the notion of a God came first into the world: making no mention of the former proof from the frame of human nature, *that in God we live, and move, and have our being*. Which argument being so natural and internal to mankind, doth nevertheless (I know not how) seem more remote and obscure to the generality of men; who are readier to fetch a reason from the immense distance of the starry heavens and the outmost walls of the world, than seek one at home, within themselves, in their own faculties and constitutions. So that hence we may perceive how prudently that was waved, and the second here insisted on by St. Paul to the rude and simple semi-barbarians of Lycaonia: *he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*. Which words we shall now interpret in a large and free acceptance; so that this *second* theme may comprehend all the brute inanimate matter of the universe, as the *former* comprised all visible creatures in the world, that have understanding, or sense, or vegetable life. These two arguments are the voices of nature, the unanimous suffrages of all real beings and substances created, that are naturally knowable without revelation. And if, lastly, in the *third* place, we can evince the divine existence from the adjuncts and circumstances of human life; if we find in all ages, in all civilized nations, an universal belief and worship of a divinity; if we find many unquestionable records of supernatural and miraculous effects; if we find many faithful relations of prophecies punctually accomplished; of prophecies so well attested, above the suspicion of falsehood; so remote, and particular, and unlikely to come to pass, beyond the possibility of good guessing, or the mere foresight of human wisdom: if we find a most warrantable tradition, that at sundry times and in divers manners God spake unto mankind by his Prophets, and by his Son, and his Apostles, who have deli-

* *Præterea, cœli rationes ordine certo, Et varia annorum cernebant tempora verti.*
Lucr. l. v. 1182.

• *Nam bene qui didicerit Deum securum agere ævum,*

Si tamen interea mirantur, &c. Id. vi. 57.
Quis hunc hominem dixerit, qui cum tam certo cœli motus, tum ratos astrorum ordines, &c.
Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. *Οὐδ' ἄρα ἴσονται ἴσχειν ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων ἁρτίων, ὁμῶς τε τοῦτους μεγάλης συμπληρῆς ὄντος αἰτίας, καὶ τὴν ταχυμίαν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔχοντα, χειρὸς τε καὶ Διός, ἀνατολῆς τε καὶ δυσμῆς.*
Plutarch. de Plac. Phil. l. 6.

vered to us in sacred writings a clearer revelation of his divine nature and will; if, I say, this third topic from human testimony be found agreeable to the standing vote and attestation of nature, what further proofs can be demanded or desired? What fuller evidence can our adversaries require, since all the classes of known beings are summoned to appear? Would they have us bring more witnesses than the all of the world? and will they not stand to the grand verdict and determination of the universe? They are incurable infidels, that persist to deny a Deity; when all creatures in the world, as well spiritual as corporeal, all from human race to the lowest of insects, from the cedar of Libanus to the moss upon the wall, from the vast globes of the sun and planets to the smallest particles of dust, do declare their absolute dependance upon the first author and fountain of all being, and motion, and life, the only eternal and self-existent God; with whom inhabit all majesty, and wisdom, and goodness, for ever and ever.

But, before I enter upon this argument from the origin and frame of the world; it will not be amiss to premise some particulars that may serve for an illustration of the text, and be a proper introduction to the following discourses.

As the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, were preaching the Gospel at (Acts xiv. 8.) Lystra, a city of Lycaonia in Asia the Less, among the rest of their auditors there was a lame cripple from his birth, whom Paul commanded with a loud voice, to stand upright on his feet; and immediately by a miraculous energy he leaped and walked. Let us compare the present circumstances with those of my former text, and observe the remarkable difference in the Apostle's proceedings. No question but there were several cripples at Athens, so very large and populous a city: and, if that could be dubious, I might add, that the very climate disposed the inhabitants to impotency in the feet: (Lucret. lib. vi.) *Atthide tentantur gressus, oculique in Achæis Finibus*—are the words of Lucretius; which it is probable he transcribed from Epicurus, a Gargettian and native of Athens, and therefore an unquestionable evidence in a matter of

this nature. Neither is it likely that all the Athenian cripples should escape the sight of St. Paul, (Ver. 17.) since he disputed there in the market daily with them that met him. How comes it to pass then, that we do not hear of a like miracle in that city; which one would think might have greatly conduced to the Apostle's design, and have converted, or at least confuted and put to silence, the Epicureans and Stoics? But it is not difficult to give an account of this seeming disparity, if we attend to the qualifications of the lame person at Lystra; whom Paul stedfastly beholding, and (Ver. 9.) perceiving that he had FAITH to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. This is the necessary condition that was always required by our Saviour and his Apostles: (Luke xviii. 42.) And Jesus said unto the blind man, Receive thy sight, thy FAITH hath saved thee; and to the woman that had the issue of blood, (Luke viii. 48.) Daughter, be of good comfort; thy FAITH hath made thee whole; go in peace. It was want of FAITH in our Saviour's countrymen, which hindered him from shedding among them the salutary emanations of his divine virtue; (Matt. xiii. 58.) And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. There were many diseased persons in his own country, but very few that were rightly disposed for a supernatural cure. St. Mark hath a very observable expression upon the same occasion: (Mark vi. 5.) And he could do no mighty works there, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. Καὶ ἐν ἡστυρίᾳ οὐκ ἔδραμον δυνάμεις πολλὰς. We read in St. Luke, Ch. v. 17. And the POWER (δύναμις) of the Lord was present to heal them. And, chap. vi. ver. 19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue (δύναμις) out of him, and healed them all. Now since δύναμις and ἰσχύς are words of the same root and signification, shall we so interpret the Evangelist, as if our Saviour had not power to work miracles among his unbelieving countrymen? This is the passage which that impious and impure Atheist (Vanini Dial. p. 459.) Lucilio Vanino singled out for his text in his pretended and mock apology for the Christian religion; wickedly insinuating, as if the prodigies

of Christ were mere impostures and acted by confederacy: and therefore, where the spectators were incredulous, and consequently watchful and suspicious, and not easily imposed on, he could do no mighty work there; there his arm was shortened, and his power and virtue too feeble for such supernatural effects. But the gross absurdity of this suggestion is no less conspicuous than the villainous blasphemy of it. For, can it be credible to any rational person, that St. Mark could have that meaning? that he should tax his Lord and Saviour, whom he knew to be God Almighty, with deficiency of power? He *could* do no mighty works; that is, he *would* do none, because of their unbelief. There is a frequent change of those words in all languages of the world. And we may appeal to St. Chrysostom to the common custom of speech, whatever country we live in. This therefore is the genuine sense of that expression; Christ *would* not heal their infirmities, because of the hardness and slowness of their hearts, in that they believed him not. And I think there is not one instance in all the history of the New Testament of a miracle done for any one's sake, that did not believe Jesus to be a good person, and sent from God; and had not a disposition of heart fit to receive his doctrine. (See John, ch. ix. and Matth. xvi. 14.) For to believe he was the Messiah and Son of God, was not then absolutely necessary, nor rigidly exacted; the most signal of the prophecies being not yet fulfilled by him, till his passion and resurrection. But, as I said, to obtain a miracle from him, it was necessary to believe him a good person, and sent from God. (Luke xxiii. 8.) Herod therefore hoped in vain to have seen some miracle done by him: (Mark viii. 11, 12.) and when the Pharisees sought of him a sign from heaven, tempting him, they received this disappointing answer, *Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation.* And we may observe in the Gospels, that where the persons themselves were incapable of

actual faith; (Matt. xvii. 15. xv. 22. Luke viii. 4.) yet the friends and relations of those dead that were raised again to life, of those lunatics and demoniacs that were restored to their right minds, were such as *sought after him and believed on him.* (Luke xxii. 52.) And as to the healing of Malchus's ear, it was a peculiar and extraordinary case: for, though the person was wholly unworthy of so gracious a cure, yet in the account of the meek Lamb of God it was a kind of injury done to him by the fervidness of St. Peter, who knew not yet what spirit he was of, and that his Master's kingdom was not of this world. But, besides this obvious meaning of the words of the Evangelist, there may perhaps be a sublimer sense conched under the expression. For in the divine nature *will* and *can* are frequently the selfsame thing; and freedom and necessity, that are opposites here below, do in heaven above most amicably agree and join hands together. And this is not a restraint or impotency, but the royal prerogative of the most absolute King of Kings; that he *wills* to do nothing but what he *can*, and that he *can* do nothing which is repugnant to his divine wisdom and essential goodness. God *cannot* do what is unjust, nor say what is untrue, nor promise with a mind to deceive. Our Saviour therefore *could* do no mighty work in a country of unbelievers, because it was not fit and reasonable. And so we may say of our Apostle, who was acted by the spirit of God; that he *could* do no miracle at Athens, and that because of their *unbelief*. There is a very sad and melancholy account of the success of his stay there. * *Howbeit CERTAIN men clave unto him, and believed*; a more diminutive expression, than if they had been called a few. And we do not find, that he ever visited this city again, as he did several others, where there were a competent number of disciples. And indeed if we consider the genius and condition of the Athenians at that time, how vicious and corrupt they were; how conceited of their own wit, and science, and politeness, as if they had invented corn and oil, and distributed them to

* Chrys. ad locum: ἄριστος δὲ καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ συνήρτηται φησὶν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν. So δυνάμεις is *power*, Acts iv. 20. John vii. 7. and δύναμις is *possum*. Vid. Budæi Comm. Lat. Gr.

* Τινι; δὲ ἀνδρες, ch. xvii. ver. 34.

the world; * and had first taught civility and learning, and religion, and laws to the rest of mankind; how they were puffed up with the fulsome flatteries of their philosophers, and sophists, and poets of the stage; we cannot much wonder, that they should so little regard an unknown stranger, that preached unto them an unknown God.

I am aware of an objection, that, for aught we can now affirm, St. Paul might have done several miracles at Athens, though they be not related by St. Luke. I confess I am far from asserting, that all the (See John xxi. 25. and 2 Cor. xii. 12.) miracles of our Saviour are recorded in the Gospels, or of his Apostles in the Acts. But nevertheless, in the present circumstances, I think we may conjecture, that, if any prodigy and wonder had been performed by our Apostle among those curious and pragmatical Athenians, it would have had such a consequence, as might have deserved some place in sacred history, as well as this before us at Lystra; (Acts xiv. 11.) where, *when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*; and the priests came with oxen and garlands, and would have sacrificed to them, as to Jupiter and Mercurius. That this was a common opinion among the Gentiles, that the gods sometimes assumed human shape, and conversed upon earth as strangers and travellers, must needs be well known to any one that ever looks into the ancient poets. Even the vagabond life of Apollonius Tyamensis shall be called by a bigoted sophist, † *περιηγία ἢ ἀνθρώπων. Διὸ, a peregrination of a god among men*. And when the Lystrians say, *θεοὶ ἄνθρωποι, gods in the shape of men*, they mean not, that the gods had other figure than human even in heaven itself, (for that was the received doctrine of most of the vulgar heathen, and of some sects of philosophers too,) but that they, who in their own nature were of a more august stature and glorious visage, had now contracted and debased themselves into the narrower dimensions and meaner aspects of mortal men. Now,

when the Apostles heard of this intended sacrifice, (Acts xiv. 14.) *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, &c.* St. Chrysostom upon this place hath a very odd exposition. He enquires why Paul and Barnabas do now at last reprove the people, when the priest and victims were even at the gates; and not presently, when they lift up their voice, and called them gods: for which he assigns this reason, ‡ *that because they spoke Λυκαονιστί, in the Lycaonian tongue, the Apostles did not then understand them; but now they perceived their meaning by the oxen and the garlands.* Indeed it is very probable, that the Lycaonian language was very different from the Greek as we may gather from § Ephorus, and Strabo that cites him, who make almost all the inland nations of Asia Minor to be barbarians; and from || Stephanus Byzantius, who acquaints us, that *αἰκιστρία*, a juniper-tree, was called *ἀλυσία* in the speech of the Lycaonians, *ἐν τῇ τῶν Ἀλκιδίων φωνῇ*. But, notwithstanding we can by no means allow that the great Apostle of the Gentiles should be ignorant of that language: he that so solemnly affirms of himself, 1 Cor. xiv. 18.) *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all*; and at the first effusion of this heavenly gift, (Acts ii.) *the dwellers in Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia*, (some of them near neighbours to the Lycaonians,) *heard the Apostles speak in their several tongues the wonderful works of God.* And how could these two Apostles have preached the Gospel to the Lystrians, (Acts xiv. 7.) if they did not use the common language of the country? And to what purpose did they (Ver. 15.) *cry out and speak to them*, if the hearers could not apprehend? or how could they by those (Ver. 18.) *sayings restrain the people from sacrificing*, if what they said was not intelligible? But it will be asked, why then were the Apostles so slow and backward in reclaiming them? and what can be answered to the query of St. Chrysostom? When I consider the circumstances and nature of this affair, I am persuaded they did not hear that discourse of the people.

* Cicerō pro Flaccō. Adsunt Atheienses, unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, jura, leges ortæ atque in omnes terras distributæ putantur. Isoc. Pæreg. Diod. Sic. 13.

† Ευαγγελιστῶν, ἀπὸ τοῦ

† Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἦν τὰ τοιαῦτα ὅλως, τῇ γὰρ αἰσία φωνῇ ἐπετίγγοντο διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῖς ἔλεγον, ἵνα οὐδὲν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ σίματα, τότε ἐκλυθόντες διήρτησαν τὰ λυκαονιστῶν. Chrys. ad loc.

§ Ephorus apud Strab. lib. xiv.

|| Steph. Byz. ἀπὸ τοῦ

For I can hardly conceive, that men under such apprehensions as the Lystrians then were, in the dread presence and under the very nod of the almighty Jupiter, no an idol of wood or stone, but the real and very God, (as the *Athenians made their compliment to Demetrius Poliorcetes,) should exclaim in his sight and hearing: *this, I say, seems not probable nor natural; nor is it affirmed in the text: † but they might buzz and whisper it to one another, and silently withdrawing from the presence of the Apostles, they then lift up their voices, and noised it about the city.* So that Paul and Barnabas were but just then informed of their idolatrous design, when they rent their clothes, and ran in among them, and expostulated with them; (Acts xiv. 15.) *Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you; ‡ mortal men like yourselves, as it is judiciously rendered in the ancient Latin version; otherwise the antithesis is not so plain: for the heathen theology made even the gods themselves subject to human passions and appetites, to anger, sorrow, lust, hunger, wounds, lameness, &c. § and exempted them from nothing but death and old age: and we preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities (i. e. idols) unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways: πᾶντες τὰ ἔθνη not all nations, but all the heathen, (the word HEATHEN comes from ἔθνη,) all the Gentiles, distinguished from the Jews, as the same words are translated Rom. xv. 11. and 2 Tim. iv. 17. and ought to have been so, Rom. i. 5. and xvi. 26. but much more in our text, which, according to the present version, seems to carry a very obscure, if not erroneous meaning; but by a true interpretation is very easy and intelligible: that hitherto God had suffered all the Gentiles to walk in their own ways; and excepting the Jews only, whom he chose for his own people, and prescribed them a law, he permitted the rest of mankind to walk by the mere light of nature*

About the assistance of revelation; but that now, in the fulness of time, he had even to the Gentiles also sent salvation, and opened the door of faith, and granted repentance unto life. So that these words of our Apostle are exactly coincident with that remarkable passage in his discourse to the Athenians: (Acts xvii. 30.) *And the (past) times of this ignorance (of the Gentile world) God winked at, (or || overlooked but now commandeth all men every where to repent.* And nevertheless, says our text, even in that gloomy state of heathenism, *he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, ἀγαθοποιῶν ἑς ἑκάστην, always doing good from heaven, (which seems to be the genuine punctuation, and is authorized by the Syriac interpreters,) and gave us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* Even the very Gentiles might feel after him and find him; since the admirable frame of heaven, and earth, and sea, and the munificent provision of food and sustenance for his creatures, did competently set forth his eternal power and Godhead; so that stupid idolaters and profane Atheists were then and always without excuse.

Our adversaries have used the same methods to elude the present argument from the frame of the world, as they have done to evade the former from the origin of mankind. Some have maintained, that this world hath thus existed from all eternity in its present form and condition; but others say, that the forms of particular worlds are generable and corruptible; so that our present system cannot have sustained an infinite duration already gone and expired: but however, say they, body in general, the common basis and matter of all worlds and beings, is self-existent and eternal; which being naturally divided into innumerable little particles or atoms, eternally endued with an ingenite and inseparable power of motion, by their omnifarious concussions, and combinations, and coalitions, produce successively (or at once, if matter be infinite,) an infinite number of worlds; and amongst the rest there arose this visible complex system of heaven and earth. And thus far they do agree; but then they differ about the cause and mode of

* Οὐ ξύλον, ἐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπινον. Athenæus vi. 15.

† Ὡς δὲ τις ἐπίσταν ἰδὼν ἑς πλεονάζον ἄλλον.

‡ Mortales sumus similes vobis homines. So Στετὶ πᾶσιν, *If I die, a common expression in Greek writers.*

§ αἱ γὰρ ἑκάστη ἐκ τῶν ἀστέρας καὶ ἀγέρας ἡμᾶτα πίνουσιν. Hom.

|| ἐπιβλέω.

the production of worlds, some ascribing it to fortune, and others to mechanism or nature. It is true, the astrological Atheists will give us no trouble in the present dispute; because they cannot form a peculiar *hypothesis* here, as they have done before about the origination of animals. For though some of them are so vain and senseless, as to pretend to a *thema mundi*, a calculated scheme of the nativity of our world; yet it exceeds even their absurdity, to suppose the zodiac and planets to be efficient of, and antecedent to themselves; or to exert any influences before they were in being. So that, to refute all possible explications that the Atheists have or can propose, I shall proceed in this following method:

I. First, I will prove it impossible that the primary parts of our world, the sun and the planets, with their regular motions and revolutions, should have subsisted eternally in the present or a like frame and condition.

II. Secondly, I will shew, that matter abstractly and absolutely considered, cannot have subsisted eternally; or, if it has, yet motion cannot have co-existed eternally with it, as an inherent property and essential attribute of the Atheist's god, MATTER.

III. Thirdly, though universal matter should have endured from everlasting, divided into infinite particles in the Epicurean way: and though motion should have been co-eval and co-eternal with it; yet those particles or atoms could never of themselves by omnifarious kinds of motion, whether fortuitous or mechanical, have fallen or been disposed into this or a like visible system.

IV. And, fourthly, *a posteriori*, that the order and beauty of the inanimate parts of the world, the discernible ends and final causes of them, the *sublimity*, or a meliority above what was necessary to be, do evince by a reflex argument, that it is the product and workmanship, not of a blind mechanism or blinder chance, but of an intelligent and benign Agent; *who by his excellent wisdom made the heavens and earth, and gives rain and fruitful seasons for the service of man.*

I shall speak to the two first propositions in my present discourse; reserving the latter for other opportunities.

I. First, therefore: that the present or a like frame of the world hath not subsisted

from everlasting. We will readily concede, that a thing may be truly eternal, though its duration be terminated at one end. For so we affirm human souls to be immortal and eternal, though ~~there was a time when they were nothing~~; and therefore their infinite duration will always be bounded at one extreme by that first beginning of existence. So that, for aught appears as yet, the revolutions of the earth and other planets about the sun, though they be limited at one end by the present revolution, may nevertheless have been infinite and eternal without any beginning. But then we must consider, that this duration of human souls is only *potentially* infinite. For their eternity consists only in an endless capacity of continuance without ever ceasing to be, in a boundless futurity that can never be exhausted, or all of it be past and present. But their duration can never be *positively* and *actually* eternal; because it is most manifest, that no moment can ever be assigned, wherein it shall be true, that such a soul hath then actually sustained an infinite duration. For that supposed infinite duration will by the very supposition be limited at two extremes, though never so remote as under, and consequently must needs be finite. Wherefore the true nature and notion of a soul's eternity is this: that the future moments of its duration can never be all *past and present*, but still there will be a futurity and potentiality of more for ever and ever. So that we evidently perceive from this instance, that whatever successive duration shall be bounded at one end, and be all *past and present*, for that reason must be finite. Which necessarily evinceth, that the present or a like world can never have been eternal; or that there cannot have been infinite past revolutions of a planet about a sun. For this supposed infinity is terminate at one extreme by the *present* revolution, and all the other revolutions are confessedly past; so that the whole duration is bounded at one end, and all *past and present*; and therefore cannot have been infinite, by what was proved before. And this will shew us the vast difference between the false successive eternity backwards, and the real one to come. For, consider the *present* revolution of the earth, as the bound and confine of them both. God Almighty, if he so pleaseth, may continue

this motion to perpetuity in infinite revolutions to come; because futurity is inexhaustible, and can never be all spent or run out by *past* and *present* moments. But then, if we look backwards from this present revolution, we may apprehend the impossibility of infinite revolutions on that side; because all are already *past*, and so were once actually *present*, and consequently are finite, by the argument before. For surely we cannot conceive a preteriteness (if I may say so) still backwards in *infinitum*, that never was present; as we can an endless futurity, that never will be present. So that though one is potentially infinite; yet nevertheless the other is actually finite. And this reasoning doth necessarily conclude against the past infinite duration of all successive motion and mutable beings: but it doth not at all affect the eternal existence of God, in whose invariable nature there is no past or future; who is omnipresent not only as to space, but as to duration, and, with respect to such omnipresence, it is certain and manifest, that succession and motion are mere impossibilities, and repugnant in the very terms.

And, secondly, though what hath been now said hath given us so clear a view of the nature of successive duration, as to make more arguments needless; yet I shall here briefly shew, how our adversaries' hypothesis without any outward opposition destroys and confutes itself. For let us suppose infinite revolutions of the earth about the sun to be already gone and expired; I take it to be self-evident, that, if none of those past revolutions has been infinite ages ago, all the revolutions put together cannot make the duration of infinite ages: it follows therefore from this supposition, that there may be some one assignable revolution among them, that was at an infinite distance from the present. But it is self-evident likewise, that no one past revolution could be infinitely distant from the present: for then an infinite or unbounded duration may be bounded at two extremes by two annual revolutions; which is absurd and a contradiction. And again, upon the same supposition of an eternal past duration of the world, and of infinite annual revolutions of the earth about the sun I would ask concerning the

monthly revolutions of the moon about the earth, or the diurnal ones of the earth upon its own axis, both which by the very hypothesis are coeval with the former; whether these also have been finite or infinite? Not finite to be sure; because then a finite number would be greater than an infinite, as 12 or 365 are more than an unit. Nor infinite neither; for then two or three infinities would exceed one another; as a year exceeds a month, or both exceed a day. So that both ways the supposition is repugnant and impossible.

And, thirdly, the arguments already used, from the gradual increase of mankind, from the known plantations of most countries, from the recent invention of letters and arts, &c. do conclude as forcibly against the eternity of the world, as against infinite generations of human race. For if the present frame of the earth be supposed eternal; by the same notion they make mankind to have been coeternal with it. For otherwise this eternal earth, after she had been eternally barren and desolate, must at last have spontaneously produced mankind, without new cause from without, or any alteration in her own texture: which is so gross an absurdity, that even no Atheist hath yet affirmed it. So that it evidently follows, since mankind had a beginning, that the present form of the earth, and therefore the whole system of the world, had a beginning also.

Which being proved and established: we are now enabled to give answers to some bold queries and objections of Atheists; that since God is described as a being infinitely powerful and perfectly good; and that these attributes were essential to him from all eternity; why did he not by his power, for the more ample communication of his goodness, create the world from eternity, if he created it at all? or at least many millions of ages ago before this short span of duration of five or six thousand years? To the first we reply, that since we have discovered an internal and natural impossibility that a successive duration should be actually eternal; it is to us a flat contradiction, that the world should have been created from everlasting. And therefore it is no affront to the divine omnipotence, if by reason of the formal

incapacity and repugnancy of the thing we conceive that the world could not possibly have been made from all eternity, even by God himself. Which gives an answer to the second question, Why created so lately? For, if it could not be created from eternity, there can no instant be assigned for its creation in time, though never so many myriads and millions of years since, but the same query may be put, Why but now, and Why so late? for even before that remote period God was eternally existent, and might have made the world as many myriads of ages still backwards before that: and consequently this objection is absurd and unreasonable. For else, if it was good and allowable, it would eternally hinder God from exerting his creative power, because he could never make a world so early, at any given moment; but it may truly be said he could have created it sooner. Or if they think there may be a soonest instant of possible creation; yet, since all instants have an equal pretence to it in human apprehension, why may not this recent production of the world, according to sacred authority, be supposed to be that soonest? At least it may make that claim to it that cannot be baffled by their arguments, which equally conclude against all claims, against any conceivable beginning of the world.

And so when they profanely ask, Why did not this supposed Deity, if he really made the heavens, make them boundless and immense, a fit and honourable mansion for an infinite and incomprehensible being; or at least vastly more ample and magnificent than this narrow cottage of a world? we may make them this answer: *First*, it seems impossible and a contradiction, that a created world should be infinite; because it is the nature of quantity and motion, that they can never be actually and positively infinite: they have a power indeed and a capacity of being increased without end; so as no quantity can be assigned so vast, but still a larger may be imagined; no motion so swift or languid, but a greater velocity or slowness may still be conceived; no positive duration of it so long, than which a longer may not be supposed; but even that very power hinders them from being actually

infinite. From whence, *secondly*, it follows, that though the world was a million of times more spacious and ample than even astronomy supposes it, or yet another million bigger than that, and so on in infinite progression; yet still they might make the same exception world without end. For since God Almighty can do all that is possible, and quantity hath always a possibility of being enlarged more and more; he could never create so ample a world, but still it would be true, that he could have made a bigger; the fecundity of his creative power never growing barren, nor ever to be exhausted. Now what may always be an exception against all possible worlds, can never be a just one against any whatsoever.

And when they scoffingly demand, Why would this imaginary Omnipotent make such mean pieces of workmanship? What an indigent and impotent thing is his principal creature man? Would not boundless beneficence have communicated his divine perfections in the most eminent degree? they may receive this reply; that we are far from such arrogance, as to pretend to the highest dignity, and be the chief of the whole creation: we believe an invisible world, and a scale of spiritual beings all nobler than ourselves: nor yet are we so low and base as their atheism would depress us; not walking statues of clay, not the sons of brute earth, whose final inheritance is death and corruption: we carry the image of God in us, a rational and immortal soul; and, though we be now indigent and feeble, yet we aspire after eternal happiness, and firmly expect a great exaltation of all our natural powers. But whatsoever was or can be made, whether angels or archangels, cherubims or seraphims, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all the glorious host of heaven, must needs be finite, and imperfect, and dependent creatures: and God out of the exceeding greatness of his power is still able, without end, to create higher classes of beings. For where can we put a stop to the efficacy of the Almighty? or what can we assign for the highest of all possible finite perfections? There can be no such thing as an almost infinite; there can be nothing next or second to an om-

omnipotent God: * *Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum*; as the heathen poet said excellently well of the supposed father of gods and men. The infinite distance between the Creator and the noblest of all creatures can never be measured nor exhausted by endless addition of finite degrees. So that no actual creature can ever be the most perfect of all possible creation. Which shews the folly of this query, that might always be demanded, let things be as they will, that would impiously and absurdly attempt to tie the arm of omnipotence from doing any thing at all, because it can never do its utmost.

II. I proceed now to the second proposition, that neither matter universally and abstractly considered, nor motion as its attribute and property, can have existed from all eternity. And to this I shall speak the more briefly, not only because it is an abstruse and metaphysical speculation, but because it is of far less moment and consequence than the rest: since without this we can evince the existence of God from the origin and frame of the universe. For if the present or a like system of the world cannot possibly have been eternal, † and if without God it could neither naturally nor fortuitously emerge out of a chaos, ‡ we must necessarily have recourse to a Deity, as the contriver and maker of heaven and earth; whether we suppose he created them out of nothing, or had the materials ready eternally to his hand. But nevertheless, because we are verily persuaded of the truth of this article, we shall briefly assign some reasons of our belief in these following particulars.

First, *It is a thing possible, that matter may have been produced out of nothing.* It is urged as an universal maxim, that *nothing can proceed from nothing.* Now this we readily allow; and yet it will prove nothing against the possibility of creation. For, when they say, nothing from nothing, they must so understand it, as excluding all causes both material and efficient. In which sense it is most evidently and intallibly true, being equivalent to this proposition, that nothing can make itself; or, nothing cannot bring

its no-self out of non-entity into something. Which only expresses thus much, that matter did not produce itself, or, that all substances did not emerge out of an universal nothing. Now, who ever talked at that rate? We do not say, the world was created from nothing and by nothing; we assert an eternal God to have been the efficient cause of it. So that a creation of the world out of nothing by something, and by that something that includes in its nature a necessary existence and perfection of power, is certainly no contradiction, nor opposes that common maxim. Whence it manifestly follows, that since God may do any thing that implies not a contradiction; if there be such an essence as God, he may have created matter out of nothing, that is, have given an existence to matter, which had no being before.

And, secondly, *It is very probable, that matter has been actually created out of nothing.* In a former discourse we have proved sufficiently, that human souls are not mere modifications of matter, but real and spiritual substances, that have as true an existence as our very bodies themselves. Now, no man, as I conceive, can seriously think that his own soul hath existed from all eternity. He cannot believe the stuff or materials of his soul to have been eternal, and the soul to have been made up of them at the time of his conception. For a human soul is no compound being; it is not made of particles, as our bodies are, but it is one simple homogeneous essence. neither can he think, that the personality of his soul, with its faculties inherent in it, has existed eternally; this is against common sense, and it needs no refutation. Nay, though a man could be so extravagant as to hold this assertion, that his soul, his personal self, has been from everlasting, yet even this in the issue would be destructive to atheism, since it supposes an eternal Being, endued with understanding and wisdom. We will take it then as a thing confessed, that the immaterial souls of men have been produced out of nothing. But if God hath actually created those intelligent substances that have such nobility and excellency of being above

* Heat Car. i. 14.

† By the poet Virg. Georg. i. 4.

‡ By the poet Virg. Georg. i. 4.

brute senseless matter; it is prevariciousness to deny that he created matter also: unless they will say, necessary existence is included in the very essence and idea of matter.

But matter doth not include in its nature a necessity of existence. For human souls, as is proved before, have been actually created, and consequently have not necessary existence included in their essence. Now can any man believe, that his spiritual soul, that understands, and judges, and invents: endowed with those divine faculties of sense, memory, and reason; hath a dependent and precarious being created and preserved by another; while the particles of this dead ink and paper have been necessarily eternal and uncreated? It is against natural reason; and no one, while he contemplates an individual body, can discern that necessity of its existence. But men have been taught to believe, that extension or space, and body are both the selfsame thing. So that because they cannot imagine, how space can either begin or cease to exist; they presently conclude, that extended infinite matter must needs be eternal. But body and space or distance are quite different things, and a vacuity is interspersed among the particles of matter, and such a one as hath a vastly larger extension than all the matter of the universe. Which now being supposed, they ought to abstract their imagination from that false infinite extension, and conceive one particle of matter, surrounded on all sides with vacuity, and contiguous to no other body. And whereas formerly they fancied an immense boundless space, as an homogeneous one; which great individual they believed might deserve the attribute of necessary existence: let them now please to imagine one solitary atom, that hath no dependence on the rest of the world; and is no more sustained in being by other matter, than it could be created by it; and then I would ask the question, whether this poor atom, sluggish and unactive as it is, doth involve necessity of existence, the first and highest of all perfections, in its particular nature and notion? I dare presume for the negative in the judg-

ments of all serious men. * And I observe the Epicureans take much pains to convince us, that in natural corruptions and dissolutions, atoms are not reduced to nothing; which surely would be needless, if the very idea of atoms imported self-existence. And yet if one atom do not include so much in its notion and essence; all atoms put together, that is, all the matter of the universe cannot include it. So that upon the whole matter, since creation is no contradiction; since God hath certainly created nobler substances than matter; and since matter is not necessarily eternal; it is most reasonable to believe, that the eternal and self-existent God created the material world, and produced it out of nothing.

And then as to the last proposition, that motion as an attribute or property of matter cannot have been from eternity. That we may waive some metaphysical arguments, which demonstrate that local motion cannot be positively eternal, we shall only observe in two words, that if matter be not essentially eternal, as we have shewed before, much less can motion be, that is but the adjunct and accident of it. Nay, though we should concede an eternity to matter, yet why must motion be coeval with it, which is not only not inherent and essential to matter, but may be produced and destroyed at the pleasure of free agents; both which are flatly repugnant to an eternal and necessary duration. I am aware how some have asserted, that the same quantity of motion is always kept up in the world; which may seem to favour the opinion of its infinite duration: but that assertion doth solely depend upon an absolute *plenum*; which being refuted in my next discourse, it will then appear how absurd and false that conceit is, about the same quantity of motion; how easily disproved from that power in human souls to excite motion when they please, and from the gradual increase of men and other animals, and many arguments besides. Therefore let this also be concluded, that motion has not been eternal in an infinite past duration: which was the last thing to be proved.

SERMON III.

By, RICHARD BENTLEY, D.D.

[Preached Nov. the 7th, 1692.]

A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Frame of the World.

Acts xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

WHEN we first entered upon this topic, the demonstration of God's existence from the origin and frame of the world, we offered to prove four propositions

I. That this present system of heaven and earth cannot possibly have subsisted from all eternity.

II. That matter considered generally, and abstractly from any particular form and concretion, cannot possibly have been eternal; or, if matter could be so; yet motion cannot have co-existed with it eternally, as an inherent property and essential attribute of matter. These two we have already established in the preceding discourse; we shall now shew, in the third place,

III. That, though we should allow the Atheists, that matter and motion may have been from everlasting; yet if (as they now suppose) there were once no sun, nor stars, nor earth, nor planets, but the particles that now constitute them were diffused in the mundane space in manner of a chaos without any concretion or coalition; those dispersed particles could never of themselves by any kind of natural motion, whether called fortuitous, or mechanical, have convened into this present or any other like frame of heaven and earth.

1. And first, as to that ordinary cant of illiterate and puny Atheists, the *fortuitous* or *casual* concurrence of atoms, that compendious and easy dispatch of the most important and difficult affair, the formation of a world; (besides that in our next undertaking it will be refuted all along;) I shall now briefly dispatch

it, from what hath been formerly said concerning the true notions of fortune, and chance. Whereby it is evident, that in the atheistical hypothesis of the world's production, fortuitous and mechanical must be the selfsame thing. Because *fortune* is no real entity nor physical essence, but a mere relative signification, denoting only this; that such a thing said to fall out by fortune was really effected by material and necessary causes; but the person, with regard to whom it is called fortuitous, was ignorant of those causes or their tendencies, and did not design or foresee such an effect. This is the only allowable and genuine notion of the word fortune. But thus to affirm, that the world was made *fortuitously*, is as much as to say, that before the world was made, there was some intelligent agent or spectator, who designing to do something else, or expecting that something else would be done with the materials of the world, there were some occult and unknown motions and tendencies in matter, which mechanically formed the world beside his design or expectation. Now the Atheists, we may presume, will be loth to assert a fortuitous formation in this proper sense and meaning; whereby they will make understanding to be older than heaven and earth. Or if they should so assert it; yet, unless they will affirm that the intelligent agent did dispose and direct the inanimate matter, (which is what we would bring them to,) they must still leave their atoms to their mechanical affections; not able to make one step toward the production of a world beyond the necessary laws of motion. It is plain then, that *fortune*, as to the matter before us, is but a synonymous word with nature and necessity. It remains that we examine the adequate meaning of *chance*; which properly signifies, that all events called casual, among inanimate bodies, are mechanically and naturally produced according to the determinate figures, and textures, and motions of those bodies; with this negation only, that those inanimate bodies are not conscious of their own operations, nor contrive and cast about how to bring such events to pass. So that thus to say, that the world was made *casually* by the concurrence of atoms,

is no more than to affirm, that the atoms composed the world mechanically and fatally; only they were not sensible of it, nor studied and considered about so noble an undertaking. For if atoms formed the world according to the essential properties of bulk, figure, and motion, they formed it *mechanically*; and if they formed it mechanically without perception and design, they formed it *casually*. So that this negation of consciousness being all that the notion of chance can add to that of mechanism; we, that do not dispute this matter with the Atheists, nor believe that atoms ever acted by counsel and thought, may have leave to consider the several names of *fortune*, and *chance*, and *nature*, and *mechanism*, as one and the same hypothesis. Wherefore once for all to overthrow all possible explications which Atheists have or may assign for the formation of the world, we will undertake to evince this following proposition:

2. That the atoms or particles which now constitute heaven and earth, being once separate and diffused in the mundane space, like the supposed *chaos*, could never, without a God, by their mechanical affections, have convened into this present frame of things, or any other like it.

Which that we may perform with the greater clearness and conviction, it will be necessary, in a discourse about the formation of the world, to give you a brief account of some of the most principal and systematical *phenomena* that occur in the world now that it is formed.

(1.) The most considerable *phenomenon* belonging to terrestrial bodies is the general action of *gravitation*, whereby all known bodies in the vicinity of the earth do tend and press towards its centre: not only such as are sensibly and evidently heavy, but even those that are comparatively the lightest, and even in their proper place, and natural elements; (as they usually speak;) as air gravitates even in air, and water in water. This hath been demonstrated and experimentally proved beyond contradiction, by several ingenious persons of the present age, but by none so perspicuously, and copiously, and accurately, as by the honourable Founder of this Lecture, in his incomparable *Treatises of the Air and Hydrostatics*,

(2.) Now this is the constant property of *gravitation*, that the weight of all bodies around the earth is ever proportional to the quantity of their matter; as for instance, a pound weight examined hydrostatically, of all kinds of bodies, though of the most different forms and textures, doth always contain an equal quantity of solid mass or corporeal substance. This is the ancient doctrine of the † Epicurean physiology, then and since very probably indeed, but yet precariously asserted: but it is lately demonstrated and put beyond controversy by that very excellent and divine theorist † Mr. Isaac Newton, to whose most admirable sagacity and industry we shall frequently be obliged in this and the following discourse.

I will not entertain this auditory with an account of the demonstration; but referring the curious to the book itself for full satisfaction, I shall now proceed and build upon it as a truth solidly established, that all bodies weigh according to their matter; provided only that the compared bodies be at equal distances from the centre toward which they weigh. Because the further they are removed from the centre, the lighter they are; decreasing gradually and uniformly in weight, in a duplicate proportion to the increase of the distance.

(3.) Now since gravity is found proportional to the quantity of matter, there is a manifest necessity of admitting a *vacuum*, another principal doctrine of the *atomical* philosophy. Because if there were every where an absolute plenitude and density without any empty pores and interstices between the particles of bodies, then all bodies of equal dimensions would contain an equal quantity of matter; and consequently, as we have shewed before, would be equally ponderous; so that gold, copper, stone, wood, &c. would have all the same specific weight; which experience assures us they have not: neither would any of them descend in the air, as we all see they do; because, if all space was full, even the air would be as dense and specifically as heavy as they. If it be said, that, though the difference of specific gravity may proceed from variety of texture, the lighter bodies being of a more loose and porous composition, and the heavier more

* Mr. Boyle's *Physic. Exp. of Air. Hydrostat. Paradoxes*.

† Lucret. lib. i.

† Newton. *Philos. Natur. Princ. Math.* lib. iii. prop. 6.

dense and compact; yet an ethereal subtile matter, which is in a perpetual motion, may penetrate and pervade the minutest and inmost cavities of the closest bodies, and adapting itself to the figure of every pore, may adequately fill them; and so prevent all vacuity, without increasing the weight. To this we answer, that that subtile matter itself must be of the same substance and nature with all other matter, and therefore it also must weigh proportionally to its bulk; and as much of it as at any time is comprehended within the pores of a particular body must gravitate jointly with that body; so that if the presence of this ethereal matter made an absolute fulness, all bodies of equal dimensions would be equally heavy: which being refuted by experience, it necessarily follows, that there is a vacuity; and that (notwithstanding some little objections full of cavil and sophistry) mere and simple extension or space hath a quite different nature and notion from real body and impenetrable substance.

(4.) This therefore being established; in the next place, it is of great consequence to our present enquiry, if we can make a computation, how great is the whole sum of the void spaces in our system, and what proportion it bears to the corporeal substance. * By many and accurate trials it manifestly appears, that refined gold, the most ponderous of known bodies, (though even that must be allowed to be porous too, because it is dissoluble in mercury, and aqua regis, and other chymical liquors; and because it is naturally a thing impossible, that the figures and sizes of its constituent particles should be so justly adapted, as to touch one another in every point,) I say, gold is in specific weight to common water as 19 to 1; and water to common air as 850 to 1: so that gold is to air as 16150 to 1. Whence it clearly appears, seeing matter and gravity are always commensurate, that (though we should allow the texture of gold to be entirely close without any vacuity) the ordinary air in which we live and respire is of so thin a composition, that 16149 parts of its dimensions are mere emptiness and nothing; and the remaining one only material and real substance. But if gold itself be admitted, as it must be, for a porous concrete, the pro-

portion of void to body in the texture of common air will be so much the greater. And thus it is in the lowest and densest region of the air near the surface of the earth, where the whole mass of air is in a state of violent compression, the inferior being pressed and constipated by the weight of all the incumbent. But, since the air is now certainly known to consist of † elastic or springy particles, that have a continual tendency and endeavour to expand and display themselves; and the dimensions, to which they expand themselves, to be reciprocally as the compression; it follows, that the higher you ascend in it, where it is less and less compressed by the superior air, the more and more it is rarefied. So that at the height of a few miles from the surface of the earth, it is computed to have some million parts of empty space in its texture for one of solid matter. And at the height of one terrestrial semidiameter (not above four thousand miles) the ether is of that wonderful tenuity, ‡ that, by an exact calculation, if a small sphere of common air of one inch diameter (already 16149 parts nothing) should be further expanded to the thinness of that ether, it would more than take up the vast orb of Saturn, which is many million million times bigger than the whole globe of the earth. And yet, the higher you ascend above that region, the rarefaction still gradually increases without stop or limit: so that, in a word, the whole concave of the firmament, except the sun and planets and their atmospheres, may be considered as a mere void. Let us allow then, that all the matter of the system of our sun may be 30,000 times as much as the whole mass of the earth; and we appeal to astronomy, if we are not liberal enough and even prodigal in this concession. And let us suppose further, that the whole globe of the earth is entirely solid and compact without any void interstices; notwithstanding what hath been shewed before, as to the texture of gold itself. Now, though we have made such ample allowances, we shall find, notwithstanding, that the void space of our system is immensely bigger than all its corporeal mass. For, to proceed upon our supposition, that all the matter within the firmament is 50,000 times bigger than the solid

* Mr Boyle of Air and Porosity of Bodies.

† Mr. Boyle, *ibid.*

‡ Newton. *Philos. Nat. Principia Math.* p. 302.

globe of the earth; if we assume the diameter of the *orbis magnus* (wherein the earth moves about the sun) to be only 7000 times as big as the diameter of the earth, (though the latest and most accurate observations make it thrice 7000,) and the diameter of the firmament to be only 100,000 times as long as the diameter of the *orbis magnus*, (though it cannot possibly be less than that, but may be vastly and unspeakably bigger,) we must pronounce, after such large concessions on that side, and such great abatements on ours, that the sum of empty spaces within the concave of the firmament is 6860 million million million times bigger than all the matter contained in it.

Now from hence we are enabled to form a right conception and imagination of the supposed *chaos*, and then we may proceed to determine the controversy with more certainty and satisfaction, whether a world like the present could possibly without a divine influence be formed in it, or no?

1. And first, because every fixed star is supposed by astronomers to be of the same nature with our sun; and each may very possibly have planets about them, though by reason of their vast distance they be invisible to us; we will assume this reasonable supposition, that the same proportion of void space to matter, which is found in our sun's region within the sphere of the fixed stars, may competently well hold in the whole mundane space. I am aware, that in this computation we must not assign the whole capacity of that sphere for the region of our sun; but allow half of its diameter for the *radii* of the several regions of the next fixed stars: so that diminishing our former number, as this last consideration requires, we may safely affirm from certain and demonstrated principles, that the empty space of our solar region (comprehending half of the diameter of the firmament) is 8575 hundred thousand million million times more ample than all the corporeal substance in it. And we may fairly suppose, that the same proportion may hold through the whole extent of the universe.

2. And secondly, as to the state or condition of matter before the world was a making, which is compendiously expressed by the word *chaos*; they must either suppose, that the matter of our solar system was *evenly* or well-nigh evenly diffused

through the region of the sun, which would represent a particular chaos; or that all matter universally was so spread through the whole mundane space, which would truly exhibit a general chaos; no part of the universe being rarer or denser than another. And this is agreeable to the ancient description of chaos, that * *the heavens and earth had* *μία ἰδίαν, μίαν μορφήν, one form, one texture and constitution; which could not be, unless all the mundane matter were uniformly and evenly diffused. It is indifferent to our dispute, whether they suppose it to have continued a long time or very little in the state of diffusion. For, if there were but one single moment in all past eternity, when matter was so diffused, we shall plainly and fully prove, that it could never have convened afterwards into the present frame and order of things.*

3. It is evident from what we have newly proved, that in the supposition of such a chaos or such an even diffusion either of the whole mundane matter, or that of our system, (for it matters not which they assume,) every single particle would have a sphere of void space around it 8575 hundred thousand million million times bigger than the dimensions of that particle. Nay, further, though the proportion already appear so immense; yet every single particle would really be surrounded with a void sphere eight times as capacious as that newly mentioned; its diameter being compounded of the diameter of the proper sphere, and the semi-diameters of the contiguous spheres of the neighbouring particles. From whence it appears, that every particle (supposing them globular or not very oblong) would be above nine million times their own length from any other particle. And moreover, in the whole surface of this void sphere there can only twelve particles be *evenly* placed, as the hypothesis requires; that is, at equal distances from the central one and from each other: so that if the matter of our system or of the universe was equally dispersed, like the supposed chaos, the result and issue would be, not only that every atom would be many million times its own length distant

* Diod. Sicul. lib. i. Κατὰ τὴν ἑξ ἀρχῆς τῶν θένων σκεῖσιν μίαν ἴδιαν ὁμοιάν τε καὶ ἁπλὴν, μεμνημένην ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως. Apoll. Rhodius, lib. i. Ἦσαν δ' ἡε γαῖα καὶ ὁὐρανὸς ἰδίῃ δόλῳ καὶ, τὸ πρῶτον ἅλληλα σφαιρῇ συνικνησθέντα μορφῇ.

from any other; but, if any one should be moved mechanically (without direction or attraction) to the limit of that distance, it is above a hundred million millions odds to an unit, that it would not strike upon any other atom, but glide through an empty interval without any contact.

4. It is true, that while I calculate these measures, I suppose* all the particles of matter to be at absolute rest among themselves, and situated in an exact and mathematical evenness; neither of which is likely to be allowed by our adversaries, who not admitting the former, but asserting the eternity of motion, will consequently deny the latter also: because, in the very moment that motion is admitted in the chaos, such an exact evenness cannot possibly be preserved. But this I do, not to draw any argument against them from the universal rest or accurately equal diffusion of matter; but only that I may better demonstrate the great rarity and tenuity of their imaginary chaos, and reduce it to computation; which computation will hold with exactness enough, though we allow the particles of the chaos to be variously moved, and to differ something in size, and figure, and situation. For if some particles should approach nearer each other than in the former proportion; with respect to some other particles they would be as much remoter. So that, notwithstanding a small diversity of their positions and distances, the whole aggregate of matter, as long as it retained the name and nature of chaos, would retain well-nigh an uniform tenuity of texture, and may be considered as an homogeneous fluid; as several portions of the same sort of water are reckoned to be of the same specific gravity: though it be naturally impossible that every particle and pore of it, considered geometrically, should have equal sizes and dimensions.

We have now represented the true scheme and condition of the chaos; how all the particles would be disunited; and what vast intervals of empty space would lie between each. To form a system therefore, it is necessary that these squandered atoms should convene and unite into great and compact masses, like the bodies of the earth and planets. Without such a coalition the diffused chaos must have continued and reigned to all eternity. But how could particles so widely dispersed combine into that closeness of texture? Our

adversaries can have only these two ways of accounting for it.

First, By the common motion of matter, proceeding from external impulse and conflict, (without attraction,) by which every body moves uniformly in a direct line, according to the determination of the impelling force. For, they may say, the atoms of the chaos being variously moved, according to this catholic law, must needs knock and interfere; by which means some that have convenient figures for mutual coherence might chance to stick together, and others might join to those, and so by degrees such huge masses might be formed, as afterwards became suns and planets: or these might arise some vertiginous motion or whirlpools in the matter of the chaos, whereby the atoms might be thrust and crowded to the middle of those whirlpools, and there constipate one another into great solid globes, such as now appear in the world.

Or, secondly, by mutual gravitation, or attraction. For they may assert that matter hath inherently and essentially such an internal energy, whereby it incessantly tends to unite itself to all other matter; so that several particles, placed in a void space, at any distance whatsoever, would without any external impulse spontaneously convene and unite together. And thus the atoms of the chaos, though never so widely diffused, might by this innate property of attraction soon assemble themselves into great spherical masses, and constitute systems like the present heaven and earth.

This is all that can be proposed by Atheists, as an efficient cause of the world. For as to the Epicurean theory, of atoms descending down an infinite space by an inherent principle of gravitation, which tends not toward other matter, but toward a vacuum or nothing; and verging from the perpendicular **nobody knows why, nor when, nor where*; it is such miserable absurd stuff, so repugnant to itself, and so contrary to the known phenomena of nature, though it contented supple unthinking atheists for a thousand years together, that we will not now honour it with a special refutation. But what it hath common with the other explications, we will fully confute together with them in these three propositions.

(1) That by common motion (without

* *Lacret. Nec regione loci certa, nec tempore certa.*

attraction) the discovered particles of the chaos could never make the world; could never convene into such great compact masses, as the planets now are; nor either acquire or continue such motions as the planets now have.

(2) That such a mutual gravitation or spontaneous attraction can neither be inherent and essential to matter; nor ever supervene to it, unless impressed and infused into it by a divine power.

(3) That though we should allow such attraction to be natural and essential to all matter; yet the atoms of a chaos could never so convene by it, as to form the present system; or, if they could form it, it could neither acquire such motions, nor continue permanent in this state without the power and providence of a divine being.

(1) And first, that by common motion the matter of chaos could never convene into such masses, as the planets now are. Any man, that considers the spacious void intervals of the chaos, how immense they are in proportion to the bulk of the atoms, will hardly induce himself to believe, that particles so widely disseminated could ever throng and crowd one another into a close and compact texture. He will rather conclude that those few which should happen to clash, might rebound after the collision; or, if they cohered, yet by the next conflict with other atoms might be separated again; and so on in an eternal vicissitude of fast and loose, without ever consociating into the huge condense bodies of planets; some of whose particles upon this supposition must have travelled many millions of leagues through the gloomy regions of chaos, to place themselves where they now are. But then how rarely would there be any clashing at all; how very rarely in comparison to the number of atoms! The whole multitude of them, generally speaking, might freely move and rove for ever with very little occurring or interfering. Let us conceive two of the nearest particles according to our former calculation; or rather let us try the same proportions in another example, that will come easier to the imagination. Let us suppose two ships, fitted with durable timber and rigging, but without pilot or mariners, to be placed in the vast Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean, as far asunder as may be: how many thousand years might expire, before these solitary vessels should happen to strike one against the other!

But let us imagine the space yet more ample, even the whole face of the earth to be covered with sea, and the two ships to be placed in the opposite poles: might not they now move long enough without any danger of clashing? And yet I find, that the two nearest atoms in our evenly diffused chaos have ten thousand times less proportion to the two void circular planes around them, than our two ships would have to the whole surface of the deluge. Let us assume then another deluge ten thousand times larger than Noah's; is it not now utterly incredible, that our two vessels, placed there antipodes to each other, should ever happen to concur? And yet let me add, that the ships would move in one and the same surface; and consequently must needs encounter, when they either advance towards one another in direct lines, or meet in the intersection of great ones; but the atoms may not only fly sideways, but over likewise and under each other; which makes it many million times more improbable that they should interfere than the ships, even in the last and unlikeliest instance. But they may say, though the odds indeed be unspeakable that the atoms do not convene in any set number of trials, yet in an infinite succession of them may not such a combination possibly happen? But let them consider, that the improbability of casual hits is never diminished by repetition of trials; they are as unlikely to fall out at the thousandth as at the first. So that in a matter of mere chance, when there is so many millions odds against any assignable experiment, it is in vain to expect it should ever succeed, even in endless duration.

But though we should concede it to be simply possible, that the matter of chaos might convene into great masses, like planets; yet it is absolutely impossible that those masses should acquire such revolutions about the sun. Let us suppose any one of those masses to be the present earth. Now the annual revolution of the earth must proceed (in this hypothesis) either from the sum and result of the several motions of all the particles that formed the earth, or from a new impulse from some external matter, after it was formed. The former is apparently absurd, because the particles that formed the round earth must needs convene from all points and quarters towards the middle, and would generally tend toward its centre; which

would make the whole compound to rest in a poise: or at least that overplus of motion, which the particles of one hemisphere could have above the other, would be very small and inconsiderable; too feeble and languid to propel so vast and ponderous a body with that prodigious velocity. And *secondly*, it is impossible that any external matter should impel that compound mass, after it was formed. It is manifest that nothing else could impel it, unless the ethereal matter be supposed to be carried about the sun like a *vortex* or whirlpool, as a vehicle to convey it and the rest of the planets. But this is refuted from what we have shewn above, that those spaces of the ether may be reckoned a mere void, the whole quantity of their matter scarce amounting to the weight of a grain. It is refuted also from matter of fact in the motion of comets; which, as often as they are visible to us, *are in the region of our planets, and there are observed to move, some in quite contrary courses to theirs, and some in cross and oblique ones, in planes inclined to the plane of the ecliptic in all kinds of angles; which firmly evinces, that the regions of the ether are empty and free, and neither assist nor resist the revolutions of planets. But moreover there could not possibly arise in the chaos any *vortices* or whirlpools at all; either to form the globes of the planets, or to revolve them when formed. It is acknowledged by all, that inanimate unactive matter moves always in a straight line, nor ever reflects in an angle nor bends in a circle, (which is a continual reflection,) unless *either* by some external impulse that may divert it from the direct motion, or by an intrinsic principle of gravity or attraction that may make it describe a curve line about the attracting body. But this latter cause is not now supposed; and the former could never beget whirlpools in a chaos of so great a laxity and thinness. For it is matter of certain experience, and universally allowed, that all bodies moved circularly have a perpetual endeavour to recede from the centre, and every moment would fly out in right lines, if they were not violently restrained and kept in by contiguous matter. But there is no such restraint in the supposed chaos, no want of empty room there; no possibility of effecting one single revolution in way of a *vortex*, which neces-

sarily requires (if attraction be not supposed) either an absolute fulness of matter, or a pretty close constipation and mutual contact of its particles.

And for the same reason it is evident, that the planets could not continue their revolutions about the sun, though they could possibly acquire them. For, to drive and carry the planets in such orbs as they now describe, that ethereal matter must be compact and dense, as dense as the very planets themselves; otherwise they would certainly fly out in spiral lines to the very circumference of the *vortex*. But we have often inculcated, that the wide tracts of the ether may be reputed as a mere extended void. So that there is nothing (in this hypothesis) that can retain and bind the planets in their orbs for one single moment; but they would immediately desert them and the neighbourhood of the sun, and vanish away in tangents to their several circles into the abyss of mundane space.

(2.) Secondly, We affirm, that mutual gravitation, or spontaneous attraction, cannot possibly be innate and essential to matter. By attraction we do not here understand what is properly, though vulgarly, called so in the operations of drawing, sucking, pumping, &c. which is really pulsion and trusion; and belongs to that common motion, which we have already shewn to be insufficient for the formation of a world. But we now mean (as we have explained it before) such a power and quality, whereby all parcels of matter would mutually attract or mutually tend and press to all others; so that, for instance, two distant atoms *in vacuo* would spontaneously convene together without the impulse of external bodies.

Now, *first*, we say, if our Atheists suppose this power to be inherent and essential to matter, they overthrow their own hypothesis; there could never be a chaos at all upon these terms; but the present form of our system must have continued from all eternity, against their own supposition, and what we have proved in our last. For, if they affirm that there might be a chaos notwithstanding innate gravity, then let them assign any period though never so remote, when the diffused matter might convene. They must confess, that before that assigned period matter had existed eternally inseparably endued with this princi-

* N. wton; *ibidem*, p. 408.

ple of attraction; and yet had never attracted nor convened before, in that infinite duration; which is so monstrous an absurdity, as even they will blush to be charged with. But some perhaps may imagine, that a former system might be dissolved and reduced to a chaos, from which the present system might have its origin; as that former had from another, and so on; new systems having grown out of old ones in infinite vicissitudes from all past eternity. But we say, that in the supposition of innate gravity no system at all could be dissolved; for how is it possible, that the matter of solid masses like earth, and planets, and stars, should fly up from their centres against its inherent principle of mutual attraction, and diffuse itself in a chaos? This is absurder than the other; that only supposed innate gravity not to be exerted; this makes it to be defeated, and to act contrary to its own nature. So that upon all accounts this essential power of gravitation or attraction is irreconcilable with the Atheist's own doctrine of a chaos. And, *secondly*, it is repugnant to common sense and reason.

It is utterly inconceivable, that inanimate brute matter, without the mediation of some immaterial being, should operate upon and affect other matter without mutual contact; that distant bodies should act upon each other through a vacuum, without the intervention of something else, by and through which the action may be conveyed from one to the other. We will not obscure and perplex with multitude of words what is so clear and evident by its own light, and must needs be allowed by all that have competent use of thinking, and are initiated into, I do not say the mysteries, but the plainest principles of philosophy. Now mutual gravitation or attraction, in our present acception of the words, is the same thing with this; it is an operation, or virtue, or influence of distant bodies upon each other through an empty interval, without any *effluvia*, or exhalations, or other corporeal medium to convey and transmit it. This power therefore cannot be innate and essential to matter. And, if it be not essential, it is consequently most manifest, since it doth not depend upon motion or rest, or figure or position of parts, which are all the ways that matter can diversify itself, that it could never supervene to it unless impressed and infused into it by an immaterial and divine power.

We have proved, that a power of mutual gravitation, without contact or impulse, can in nowise be attributed to mere matter; or, if it could, we shall presently shew, that it would be wholly unable to form the world out of a chaos. What then if it be made appear, that there is really such a power of gravity, which cannot be ascribed to mere matter, perpetually acting in the constitution of the present system? This would be a new and invincible argument for the being of God; being a direct and positive proof, that an immaterial living mind doth inform and actuate the dead matter, and support the frame of the world. I will lay before you some certain *phenomena* of nature, and leave it to your consideration from what principle they can proceed. It is demonstrated that the sun, moon, and all the planets do reciprocally gravitate one toward another: that the gravitating power of each of them is exactly proportional to their matter, and arises from the several gravitations or attractions of all the individual particles that compose the whole mass: that all matter near the surface of the earth (and so in all the planets) doth not only gravitate downwards, but upwards also, and sideways, and toward all imaginable points; though the tendency downward be predominant and alone discernible, because of the greatness and nearness of the attracting body, the earth: that every particle of the whole system doth attract and is attracted by all the rest, all operating upon all: that this *universal attraction or gravitation* is an incessant, regular, and uniform action by certain and established laws according to quantity of matter and longitude of distance: that it cannot be destroyed nor impaired, nor augmented by any thing, neither by motion or rest, nor situation nor posture, nor alteration of form, nor diversity of medium: that it is not a magnetical power, nor the effect of a vortical motion; those common attempts towards the explication of gravity: "these things. I say, are fully demonstrated as matters of fact, by that very ingenious author, whom we cited before. Now how is it possible that these things should be effected by any material and mechanical agent? We have evinced, that mere matter cannot operate upon matter without mutual contact. It remains then, that these

phenomena are produced *either* by the intervention of air or ether or other such medium, that communicates the impulse from one body to another; or by effluvia and spirits, that are emitted from the one, and pervene to the other. We can conceive no other way of performing them mechanically. But what impulse or agitation can be propagated through the ether, from one particle entombed and wedged in the very centre of the earth, to another in the centre of Saturn? Yet even those two particles do reciprocally affect each other with the same force and vigour, as they would do at the same distance in any other situation imaginable. And because the impulse from this particle is not directed to that only, but to all the rest in the universe; to all quarters and regions, at once invariably and incessantly; to do this mechanically, the same physical point of matter must move all manner of ways equally and constantly in the same instant and moment; which is flatly impossible. But, if this particle cannot propagate such motion, much less can it send out effluvia to all points without intermission or variation; such multitudes of effluvia as to lay hold on every atom in the universe without missing of one. Nay, every single particle of the very effluvia (since they also attract and gravitate) must in this supposition emit other secondary effluvia all the world over; and those others still emit more, and so in *infinitum*. Now, if these things be repugnant to human reason, we have great reason to affirm, that universal gravitation, a thing certainly existent in nature, is above all mechanism and material causes, and proceeds from a higher principle, a divine energy and impression.

(3.) Thirdly, we affirm, that, though we should allow that reciprocal attraction is essential to matter, yet the atoms of a chaos could never so convene by it, as to form the present system; or, if they could form it, yet it could neither acquire these revolutions, nor subsist in the present condition, without the conservation and providence of a divine Being.

1. For first, if the matter of the universe, and consequently the space through which it is diffused, be supposed to be *finite*, (and I think it might be demonstrated to be so, but that we have already exceeded the just measures of a sermon,) then, since every single particle hath an innate gravitation toward all others, proportionated by matter

and distance; it evidently appears, that the outward atoms of the chaos would necessarily tend inwards, and descend from all quarters toward the middle of the whole space: for, in respect to every atom, there would lie through the middle the greatest quantity of matter and the most vigorous attraction; and those atoms would there form and constitute one huge spherical mass, which would be the only body in the universe. It is plain therefore, that upon this supposition the matter of the chaos could never compose such divided and different masses, as the stars and planets of the present world.

But, allowing our adversaries that the planets might be composed; yet however they could not possibly acquire such revolutions in circular orbs; or (which is all one to our present purpose) in ellipses very little eccentric. For let them assign any place where the planets were formed. Was it nearer to the sun than the present distances are? But that is notoriously absurd; for then they must have ascended from the place of their formation, against the essential property of mutual attraction. Or, were each formed in the same orbs in which they now move? But then they must have moved from the point of rest, in an horizontal line, without any inclination or descent. Now there is no natural cause, neither innate gravity nor impulse of external matter, that could beget such a motion: for gravity alone must have carried them downwards to the vicinity of the sun. And, that the ambient ether is too liquid and empty to impel them horizontally with that prodigious celerity, we have sufficiently proved before. Or, were they made in some higher regions of the heavens, and from thence descended by their essential gravity, till they all arrived at their respective orbs; each with its present degree of velocity, acquired by the fall? But then why did they not continue their descent till they were contiguous to the sun, whither both mutual attraction and impetus carried them? What natural agent could turn them aside; could impel them so strongly with a transverse side-blow against that tremendous weight and rapidity, when whole planets were a falling? But if we should suppose, that by some cross attraction or other they might acquire an obliquity of descent, so as to miss the body of the sun, and to fall on one side of it? Then indeed the force of their fall

would carry them quite beyond it; and so they might fetch a compass about it, and then return and ascend by the same steps and degrees of motion and velocity with which they descended before. Such an eccentric motion as this, much after the manner that comets revolve about the sun, they might possibly acquire by their innate principle of gravity; but circular revolutions, in concentric orbs about the sun or other central body, could in no wise be attained without the power of the divine arm. For the case of the planetary motion is this. Let us conceive all the planets to be formed or constituted with their centres in their several orbs; and at once to be impressed on them this gravitating energy toward all other matter, and a transverse impulse of a just quantity in each, projecting them directly in tangents to those orbs. The compound motion, which arises from this gravitation and projection together, describes the present revolutions of the primary planets about the sun, and of the secondary about those; the gravity prohibiting, that they cannot recede from the centres of their motions; and the transverse impulse withholding, that they cannot approach to them. Now although gravity could be innate, (which we have proved that it cannot be,) yet certainly this projected, this transverse and violent motion can only be ascribed to the right hand of the most high God, creator of heaven and earth.

But, finally, if we should grant them, that these circular revolutions could be naturally attained; or, if they will, that this very individual world in its present posture and motion was actually formed out of chaos by mechanical causes; yet it requires a divine power and providence to have preserved it so long in the present state and condition. For what are the causes that preserve the system of our sun and his planets, so that the planets continue to move in the same orbs, neither receding from the sun, nor approaching nearer to him? We have shown, that a transverse impulse, impressed upon the planets, retains them in their several orbs, that they are not drawn down toward the sun. And again, their gravitating powers so incline them towards the sun, that they are not carried upwards beyond their due distance from him. These two great agents, a transverse impulse, and gravity, are the secondary causes, under God, that maintain the system of sun and planets. Gravity we under-

stand to be a constant energy or faculty, perpetually acting by certain measures and naturally inviolable laws: we say, a *faculty*, and power; for we cannot conceive that the act of gravitation of this present moment can propagate itself, or produce that of the next. But the transverse impulse we conceive to have been one single act. For, by reason of the inactivity of matter, and its inability to change its present state either of moving or resting, that transverse motion would from one single impulse continue for ever equal and uniform, unless changed by the resistance of recurring bodies, or by a gravitating power. So that the planets, since they move horizontally, whereby gravity (doth not alter their swiftness) and through the liquid and unresisting spaces of the heavens, (where either no bodies at all or inconsiderable ones do occur,) may preserve the same velocity which the first impulse impressed upon them, not only for five or six thousand years, but many millions of millions. It appears then, that if there was but one vast sun in the universe, and all the rest were planets revolving around him in concentric orbs at convenient distances, such a system as that would very long endure, could it but naturally have a principle of mutual attraction; and be once actually put into circular motions. But the frame of the present world hath a quite different structure: here is an innumerable multitude of fixed stars or suns; all which being made up of the same common matter, must be supposed to be equally endued with a power of gravitation. For, if all have not such a power, what is it that could make that difference between bodies of the same sort? Nothing surely but a Deity could have so arbitrarily endued our sun and planets with a power of gravity not essential to matter; while all the fixed stars, that are so many suns, have nothing of that power. If the fixed stars then are supposed to have no power of gravitation, it is a plain proof of a divine Being. And it is as plain a proof of a divine Being, if they have the power of gravitation. For since they are neither revolved about a common centre, nor have any transverse impulse, what is there else to restrain them from approaching toward each other, as their gravitating power incites them? What natural cause can overcome nature itself? What is it that holds and keeps them in fixed stations and intervals against an incessant and inhe-

rent tendency to desert them? Nothing could hinder but that the outward stars, with their systems of planets, must necessarily have descended toward the middlemost system of the universe, whither all would be the most strongly attracted from all parts of a finite space. It is evident therefore, that the present frame of sun and fixed stars could not possibly subsist without the providence of that almighty Deity, [Psal. cxlviii.] *who spake the word and they were made; who commanded and they were created; who hath made them fast for ever and ever, and hath given them a law, which shall not be broken.*

2. And, secondly, in the supposition of an infinite chaos, it is hard indeed to determine what would follow in this imaginary case from an innate principle of gravity. But, to hasten to a conclusion, we will grant for the present, that the diffused matter might convene into an infinite number of great masses at great distances from one another, like the stars and planets of this visible part of the world. But then it is impossible, that the planets should naturally attain these circular revolutions, either by principle of gravitation, or by impulse of ambient bodies. It is plain, here is no difference as to this; whether the world be infinite, or finite: so that the same arguments that we have used before, may be equally urged in this supposition. And though we should concede, that these revolutions might be acquired, and that all were settled and constituted in the present state and posture of things; yet, we say, the continuance of this frame and order, for so long a duration as the known ages of the world, must necessarily infer the existence of God. For, though the universe was infinite, the now fixed stars could not be fixed, but would naturally convene together, and confound system with system; because, all mutually attracting, every one would move whither it was most powerfully drawn. This, they may say, is indubitable in the case of a finite world, where some systems must needs be outmost, and therefore be drawn toward the middle; but, when, infinite systems succeed one another through an infinite space, and none is either inward or

outward; may not all the systems be situated in an accurate poise; and, because equally attracted on all sides, remain fixed and unmoved? But to this we reply; that unless the very mathematical centre of gravity of every system be placed and fixed in the very mathematical centre of the attractive power of all the rest, they cannot be evenly attracted on all sides, but must preponderate some way or other. Now he that considers what a mathematical centre is, and that quantity is infinitely divisible, will never be persuaded that such an universal equilibrium, arising from the coincidence of infinite centres, can naturally be acquired or maintained. If they say, that, upon the supposition of infinite matter, every system would be infinitely, and therefore equally attracted on all sides; and consequently would rest in an exact equilibrium, be the centre of its gravity in what position soever: this will overthrow their very hypothesis. For at this rate in an infinite chaos nothing at all could be formed; no particles could convene by mutual attraction; because every one there must have infinite matter around it, and therefore must rest for ever, being evenly balanced between infinite attractions. Even the planets upon this principle must gravitate no more toward the sun than any other way; so that they would not revolve in curve lines, but fly away in direct tangents, till they struck against other planets or stars in some remote regions of the infinite space. An equal attraction on all sides of all matter is just equal to no attraction at all; and, by this means all the motion in the universe must proceed from external impulse alone; which we have proved before to be an incompetent cause for the formation of a world.

And now, O thou almighty and eternal Creator, (Psal. viii.) *having considered the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name; evermore praising thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.*

SERMON IV.

By RICHARD BENTLEY, D.D.

[Preached Dec. the 5th, 1692.]

A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Frame of the World.

Acts xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

HAVING abundantly proved in our last exercise, that the frame of the present world could neither be made nor preserved without the power of God, we shall now consider the structure and motions of our own system, if any characters of divine wisdom and goodness may be discoverable by us. And even at the first and general view it very evidently appears to us (which is our fourth and last proposition) that the order and beauty of the systematical parts of the world, the discernible ends and final causes of them, the *τι βελτιον* or meliority above what was necessary to be, do evince by a reflex argument, that it could not be produced by mechanism or chance, but by an intelligent and benign agent, *that by his excellent wisdom made the heavens.*

But, before we engage in this disquisition, we must offer one necessary caution; that we need not nor do not confine and determine the purposes of God in creating all mundane bodies, merely to human ends and uses. Not that we believe it laborious and painful to Omnipotence to create a world out of nothing; or more laborious to create a great world, than a small one; so as we might think it disagreeable to the majesty and tranquillity of the divine nature to take so much pains for our sakes. Nor do we count it any absurdity, that such a vast and immense universe should be made for the sole use of such mean and unworthy creatures as the children of men. For, if we consider the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scales against brute inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous and religious man

is of greater worth and excellency than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the world. If therefore it could appear, that all the mundane bodies are some way conducive to the service of man; if all were as beneficial to us, as the polar stars were formerly for navigation; as the moon is for the flowing and ebbing of tides, by which an inestimable advantage accrues to the world; for her officious courtesy in long winter nights, especially to the more northern nations, who, in a continual night it may be of a whole month, are as pretty well accommodated by the light of the moon reflected from frozen snow, that they do not much envy their antipodes a month's presence of the sun: if all the heavenly bodies were thus serviceable to us, we should not be backward to assign their usefulness to mankind, as the sole end of their creation. But we dare not undertake to shew, what advantage is brought to us by those innumerable stars in the galaxy and other parts of the firmament, not discernible by naked eyes, and yet each many thousand times bigger than the whole body of the earth. If you say they beget in us a great idea and veneration of the mighty author and governor of such stupendous bodies, and excite and elevate our minds to his adoration and praise; you say very truly and well. But would it not raise in us a higher apprehension of the infinite majesty and boundless beneficence of God, to suppose that those remote and vast bodies were formed, not merely upon our account, to be peeped at through an optic glass, but for different ends and nobler purposes? And yet who will deny, but that there are great multitudes of lucid stars even beyond the reach of the best telescopes; and that every visible star may have opaque planets revolve about them, which we cannot discover? Now, if they were not created for our sakes, it is certain and evident, that they were not made for their own. For matter hath no life nor perception, is not conscious of its own existence, nor capable of happiness, nor gives the sacrifice of praise and worship to the author of its being. It remains therefore, that all bodies were formed for the sake of intelligent minds: and as the earth was principally

designed for the being and service and contemplation of men, why may not all other planets be created for the like uses, each for their own inhabitants which have life and understanding? If any man will indulge himself in this speculation, he need not quarrel with revealed religion upon such an account. The holy Scriptures do not forbid him to suppose as great a multitude of systems, and as much inhabited, as he pleases. It is true, there is no mention in Moses's narrative of the creation, of any people in other planets: but it plainly appears, that the sacred historian doth only treat of the origins of terrestrial animals: he hath given us no account of God's creating the angels; and yet the same author, in the ensuing parts of the Pentateuch, makes not unfrequent mention of the *angels of God*. Neither need we be solicitous about the condition of those planetary people, nor raise frivolous disputes, how far they may participate in the miseries of Adam's fall, or in the benefits of Christ's incarnation. As if, because they are supposed to be *rational*, they must needs be concluded to be *men*? For what is man? not a *reasonable animal* merely, for that is not an adequate and distinguishing definition; but a rational mind of such particular faculties, united to an organical body of such a certain structure and form, in such peculiar laws of connection between the operations and affections of the mind and the motions of the body. Now, God Almighty, by the inexhausted fecundity of his creative power, may have made innumerable orders and classes of rational minds; some in their natural perfections higher than human souls, others inferior. But a mind of superior or meaner capacities than human could constitute a different species, though united to a human body in the same laws of connection; and a mind of human capacities would make another species, if united to a different body in different laws of connection. For this sympathetic union of a rational soul with matter, so as to produce a vital communication between them, is an arbitrary constitution of the divine wisdom: there is no reason nor foundation in the separate natures of either substance, why any motion in

the body should produce any sensation at all in the soul; or why this motion should produce that particular sensation, rather than any other. God therefore may have joined immaterial souls, even of the same class and capacities in their separate state, to other kind of bodies, and in other laws of union; and from those different laws of union there will arise quite different affections, and natures, and species of the compound beings. So that we ought not upon any account to conclude, that if there be rational inhabitants in the Moon, or Mars, or any unknown planets of other systems, they must therefore have human nature, or be involved in the circumstances of our world. And that much was necessary to be here inculcated, (which will obviate and preclude the most considerable objections of our adversaries,) that we do not determine the final causes and usefulness of the systematical parts of the world, merely as they have respect to the exigencies or conveniences of human life.

Let us now turn our thoughts and imaginations to the frame of our system, if there we may trace any visible footsteps of divine wisdom and beneficence. But we are all liable to many mistakes by the prejudices of childhood and youth, which few of us ever correct by a serious scrutiny in our riper years, and a contemplation of the *phenomena* of nature in their causes and beginnings. What we have always seen to be done in one constant and uniform manner, we are apt to imagine there was but that one way of doing it, and it could not be otherwise. This is a great error and impediment in a disquisition of this nature; to remedy which, we ought to consider every thing as not yet in being, and then diligently examine if it must needs have been at all, or what other ways it might have been as possibly as the present; and if we find a greater good and utility in the present constitution, than would have accrued either from the total privation of it, or from other frames and structures that might as possibly have been as it; we may then reasonably conclude, that the present constitution proceeded, neither from the necessity of material causes, nor the blind shuffles of an imaginary chance, but from an intelligent and

good Being, that formed it that particular way out of choice and design. And especially, if this usefulness be conspicuous not in one or a few instances only, but in a long train and series of things, this will give us a firm and infallible assurance, that we have not passed a wrong judgment.

I. Let us proceed therefore by this excellent rule in the contemplation of our system. It is evident that all the planets receive heat and light from the body of the sun. Our own earth in particular would be barren and desolate, a dead dark lump of clay, without the benign influence of the solar rays; which, without question, is true of all the other planets. It is good therefore, that there should be a sun, to warm and cherish the seeds of plants, and excite them to vegetation; to impart an uninterrupted light to all parts of this system for the subsistence of animals. But how came the sun to be luminous? not from the necessity of natural causes, or the constitution of the heavens. All the planets might have moved about him in the same orbs, and the same degrees of velocity, as now; and yet the sun might have been an opaque and cold body like them. For, as the six primary planets revolve about him, so the secondary ones are moved about them; the Moon about the Earth, the satellites about Jupiter, and others about Saturn; the one as regularly as the other, in the same sesquilateral proportion of the times of their periodical revolutions to the semi-diameters of their orbs. So that, though we suppose the present existence and conservation of the system, yet the Sun might have been a body without light or heat, of the same kind with the Earth, and Jupiter, and Saturn. But then what horrid darkness and desolation must have reigned in the world! It had been unfit for the divine purposes in creating vegetable, and sensitive, and rational creatures. It was therefore the contrivance and choice of a wise and good Being, that the central Sun should be a lucid body, to communicate warmth, and light, and life to the planets around him.

II. We have shewed in our last, that the concentric revolutions of the planets about the Sun proceed from a com-

pound motion; a gravitation towards the Sun, which is a constant energy infused into matter by the Author of all things, and a projected transverse impulse in tangents to their several orbs, that was impressed at first by the divine arm, and will carry them around till the end of the world. But now, admitting that gravity may be essential to matter, and that a transverse impulse might be acquired too by natural causes; yet, to make all the planets move about the Sun in circular orbs, there must be given to each a determinate impulse; these present particular degrees of velocity which they now have, in proportion to their distances from the Sun and to the quantity of the solar matter. For had the velocities of the several planets been greater or less than they are now, at the same distances from the Sun; or had their * distances from the Sun, or the quantity of the Sun's matter, and consequently his attractive power, been greater or less than they are now, with the same velocities; they would not have revolved in concentric circles as they do, but have moved in hyperbolas, or in ellipses very eccentric. The same may be said of the velocities of the secondary planets with respect to their distances from the centres of their orbs, and to the quantities of the matter of those central bodies. Now that all these distances, and motions, and quantities of matter should be so accurately and harmoniously adjusted in this great variety of our system, is above the fortuitous hits of blind material causes, and must certainly flow from that eternal fountain of wisdom, the Creator of heaven and earth, who *always acts geometrically*, by just and adequate numbers, and weights, and measures. And let us examine it further by our critical rule: Are the present revolutions in circular orbs more beneficial than the other would be? If the planets had moved in those lines above named, sometimes they would have approached to the Sun as near as the orb of Mercury, and sometimes have exorbitated beyond the distance of Saturn; and some have

* Newton. Philosoph. Natural. Princip. Math.

† Ὁ Θεὸς ἀνὰ γεωμετρίαν. Plat.

quite left the Sun without ever returning. Now the very constitution of a planet would be corrupted and destroyed by such a change of the interval between it and the Sun; no living thing could have endured such unspeakable excesses of heat and cold; all the animals of our earth must inevitably have perished, or rather never have been. So that as sure as it is (Gen. i.) *good, very good*, that human nature should exist; so certain it is that the circular revolutions of the earth, (and planets,) rather than those other motions, which might as possibly have been, do declare not only the power of God, but his *wisdom and goodness*.

MI. It is manifest, by our last discourse, that the ethereal spaces are perfectly fluid; they neither assist nor retard, neither guide nor divert the revolutions of the planets, which roll through those regions as free and unresisted as if they moved in a *vacuum*: so that any of them might as possibly have moved in opposite courses to the present, and in planes crossing the plane of the ecliptic in any kind of angles. Now, if the system had been fortuitously formed by the convening matter of a chaos, how is it conceivable that all the planets, both primary and secondary, should revolve the same way, from the west to the east, and that in the same plane too, without any considerable variation? No natural and necessary cause could so determine their motions; and it is millions of millions of millions odds to an unit in such a cast of a chance. Such an apt and regular harmony, such an admirable order and beauty must deservedly be ascribed to divine art and conduct: especially if we consider, that the smallest planets are situated nearest the Sun and each other; whereas Jupiter and Saturn, that are vastly greater than the rest, and have many satellites about them, are wisely removed to the extreme regions of the system, and placed at an immense distance one from the other. For even now at this wide interval they are observed in their conjunctions to disturb one another's motions a little by their gravitating powers: but if such vast masses of matter had been situated much nearer to the Sun, or to each other, (as they

might as easily have been, for any mechanical or fortuitous agent,) they must necessarily have caused a considerable disturbance and disorder in the whole system.

IV. But let us consider the particular situation of our earth, and its distance from the sun. It is now placed so conveniently, that plants thrive and flourish in it, and animals live; this is matter of fact, and beyond all dispute. But how came it to pass at the beginning, that the earth moved in its present orb? We have shewn before, that if gravity and a projected motion be fitly proportioned, any planet would freely revolve at any assignable distance within the space of the whole system. Was it mere chance then, or divine counsel and choice, that constituted the earth in its present situation? To know this; we will enquire if this particular distance from the Sun be better for our earth and its creatures, than a greater or less would have been. We may be mathematically certain, that the heat of the Sun is according to the density of the sun-beams, and is reciprocally proportional to the square of the distance from the body of the Sun*. Now by this calculation, suppose the earth should be removed and placed nearer to the Sun, and revolve for instance in the orbit of Mercury; there the whole ocean would even boil with extremity of heat, and be all exhaled into vapours; all plants and animals would be scorched and consumed in that fiery furnace. But suppose the earth should be carried to the great distance of Saturn; there the whole globe would be one frigid zone; the deepest seas under the very equator would be frozen to the bottom; there would be no life, no germination, nor any thing that comes now under our knowledge or senses. It was much better therefore, that the earth should move where it does, than in a much greater or less interval from the body of the Sun. And if you place it at any other distance, either less or more than Saturn or Mercury, you will still alter it for the worse proportionally to the change. It was situated therefore where it is by the wisdom of some voluntary agent, and

* Newton, *ibid.* p. 415.

not by the blind motions of fortune or fate. If any one should think with himself, how then can any animal at all live in Mercury and Saturn in such intense degrees of heat and cold? Let him only consider, that the matter of each planet may have a different density, and texture, and form, which will dispose and qualify it to be acted on by greater or less degrees of heat according to their several situations; and that the laws of vegetation, and life, and sustenance and propagation, are the arbitrary pleasure of God, and may vary in all planets according to the divine appointment and the exigencies of things, in manners incomprehensible to our imaginations. It is enough for our purpose to discern the tokens of wisdom in the placing of our earth; if its present constitution would be spoiled and destroyed, if we could not wear flesh and blood, if we could not have human nature at those different distances.

V. We have all learnt from the doctrine of the sphere, that the earth revolves with a double motion. For, while it is carried around the sun in the *orbis magnus* once a year, it perpetually wheels about its own axis once in a day and a night; so that in twenty-four hours space it hath turned all the parts of the equinoctial to the rays of the sun. Now the uses of this vertiginous motion are very conspicuous; for this is it that gives day and night successively over the face of the whole earth, and makes it habitable all around. Without this diurnal rotation one hemisphere would lie dead and torpid in perpetual darkness and frost, and the best part of the other would be burnt up and depopulated by so permanent a heat. It is better therefore, that the earth should often move about its own centre, and make these useful vicissitudes of night and day, than expose always the same side to the action of the sun. But how came it to be so moved? Not from any necessity of the laws of motion, or the system of the heavens: it might annually have compassed the sun, and yet have always turned the same hemisphere towards it. This is matter of fact and experiment in the motion of the moon; which is carried about the earth in the very same manner as the earth about the sun, and yet always shews the same face to us. She

indeed, notwithstanding this, turns all her globe to the sun by moving in her menstrual orb, and enjoys night and day alternately, one day of hers being equal to about fourteen days and nights of ours. But should the earth move in the same manner about the sun as the moon does about the earth, one half of it could never see the day, but must eternally be condemned to solitude and darkness. That the earth therefore frequently revolves about its own centre, is another eminent token of the divine wisdom and goodness.

VI. But let us compare the mutual proportion of these diurnal and annual revolutions; for they are distinct from one another, and have a different degree of velocity. The earth rolls once about its axis in a natural day; in which time all the parts of the equator move something more than three of the earth's diameters; which makes about 1100 in the space of a year. But within the same space of a year the centre of the earth is carried above fifty times as far once round the *orbis magnus*, whose wideness we now assume to be 20000 terrestrial diameters. So that the annual motion is more than fifty times swifter than the diurnal rotation, though we measure the latter from the equator, where the celerity is the greatest. * But it must needs be acknowledged, since the earth revolves not upon a material and rugged, but a geometrical plane, that the proportions of the diurnal and annual motions may be varied in innumerable degrees; any of which might have happened as probably as the present. What was it then that prescribed this particular celerity to each motion; this proportion and temperament between them both? Let us examine it by our former rule, if there be any *melliority* in the present constitution; if any considerable change would be for the worse. We will suppose then, that the annual motion is accelerated doubly: so that a periodical revolution would be performed in six months. Such a change would be pernicious; not only because the earth could not move in a circular orb, which we have considered before; but because, the seasons being then twice as short as they are now, the cold

* Tacquet de Circulorum Revolutionibus.

winter would overtake us before our corn and fruits could possibly be ripe. But shall this motion be as much retarded, and the seasons lengthened in the same proportion? This too would be as fatal as the other; for in most countries the earth would be so parched and effete by the drought of the summer, that it would afford still but one harvest, as it doth at the present; which then would not be a sufficient store for the consumption of a year, that would be twice as long as now. But let us suppose, that the *diurnal* rotation be either considerably swifter or slower. And first, let it be retarded; so as to make (for example) but twelve circuits in a year: then every day and night would be as long as thirty are now, not so fitly proportioned neither to the common affairs of life, nor to the exigencies of sleep and sustenance in a constitution of flesh and blood. But, let it then be accelerated, and wheel a thousand times about its centre, while the centre describes one circle about the sun: then an equinoctial day would consist but of four hours, which would be an inconvenient change to the inhabitants of the earth: such hasty nights as those would give very unwelcome interruptions to our labours and journeys, and other transactions of the world. It is *better* therefore, that the diurnal and annual motions should be so proportioned as they are. Let it therefore be ascribed to the transcendent wisdom and benignity of that God, *who hath made all things very good, and loveth all things that he hath made.*

VII. But let us consider, not the quantity and proportion only, but the mode also of this diurnal motion. You must conceive an imaginary plane, which, passing through the centres of the sun and the earth, extends itself on all sides as far as the firmament: this plane is called the *ecliptic*; and, in this, the centre of the earth is perpetually carried without any deviation. But then the axis of the earth, about which its diurnal rotation is made, is not erect to this plane of the *ecliptic*, but inclines toward it from the perpendicular, in an angle of twenty-three degrees and a half. Now, why is the axis of the earth in this particular posture, rather than any other? Did it happen by chance,

or proceed from design? To determine this question, let us see, as we have done before, if this be more beneficial to us than any other constitution. We all know, from the very elements of astronomy, that this inclined position of the axis, which keeps always the same direction and a constant parallelism to itself, is the sole cause of these grateful and needful vicissitudes of the four seasons of the year, and the variation in length of days. If we take away the *inclination*, it would absolutely undo these northern nations: the sun would never come nearer us than he doth now on the tenth of March or twelfth of September. But would we rather part with the *parallelism*? Let us suppose then, that the axis of the earth keeps always the same inclination toward the body of the sun: this indeed would cause a variety of days and nights, and seasons on the earth; but then every particular country would have always the same diversity of day and night, and the same constitution of season without any alteration: some would always have long nights and short days, others again perpetually long days and short nights; one climate would be scorched and sweltered with everlasting dog-days, while an eternal December blasted another: this surely is not quite so good as the present order of seasons. But shall the axis rather observe no constant inclination to any thing, but vary and waver at uncertain times and places? This would be a happy constitution indeed. There could be no health, no life, nor subsistence in such an irregular system; by those surprising nods of the pole we might be tossed backward or forward in a moment from January to June; nay, possibly, from the January of Greenland to the June of Abyssinia. It is *better* therefore, upon all accounts, that the axis should be continued in its present posture and direction: so that this also is a signal character of divine wisdom and goodness.

But, because several have imagined, that this skue posture of the axis is a most unfortunate and pernicious thing; that, if the poles had been erect to the plane of the *ecliptic*, all mankind would have enjoyed a very paradise upon earth, a perpetual spring, an eternal calm and serenity, and the longevity of Methuselah without pains or diseases; we are

obliged to consider it a little further. And first, as to the *universal and perpetual spring*, it is a mere poetical fancy, and (bating the equality of days and nights, which is a thing of small value) as to the other properties of a spring, it is naturally impossible, being repugnant to the very form of the globe : for, to those people that dwell under or near the equator, this spring would be a most pestilent and insupportable summer ; and as for those countries that are nearer the poles, in which number are our own and the most considerable nations of the world, a perpetual spring will not do their business ; they must have longer days, a nearer approach of the sun ; and a less obliquity of his rays ; they must have a summer and a harvest time too, to ripen their grain, and fruits, and vines, or else they must bid an eternal adieu to the very best of their sustenance. It is plain, that the centre of the earth must move all along in the *orbis magnus* ; whether we suppose a perpetual equinox, or an oblique position of the axis. So that the whole globe would continue in the same distance from the sun, and receive the same quantity of heat from him in a year or any assignable time, in either hypothesis. Though the axis then had been perpendicular, yet take the whole year about, and the earth would have had the same measure of heat that it has now. so that here lies the question, whether it is more beneficial, that the inhabitants of the earth should have the yearly quantity of heat distributed equally every day, or so disposed as it is ; a greater share of it in summer, and in winter a less ? It must needs be allowed, that the temperate zones have no heat to spare in summer ; It is very well if it be sufficient for the maturation of fruits. Now, this being granted, it is as certain and manifest, that an even distribution of the yearly heat would never have brought those fruits to maturity, as this is a known and familiar experiment, that such a quantity of fuel all kindled at once will cause water to boil, which being lighted gradually and successively will never be able to do it. It is clear therefore, that in the constitution of a perpetual equinox the best part of the globe would be desolate and useless : and, as to that little that could be in-

habited, there is no reason to expect, that it would constantly enjoy that admired *calm and serenity*. If the assertion were true, yet some perhaps may think, that such a felicity, as would make navigation impossible, is not much to be envied. But it is altogether precarious, and has no necessary foundation neither upon reason nor experience. For the winds and rains and other affections of the atmosphere do not solely depend (as that assertion supposeth) upon the course of the sun ; but partly, and perhaps most frequently, upon steams and exhalations from subterraneous heat ; upon the positions of the moon, the situations of seas, or mountains, or lakes, or woods and many other unknown or uncertain causes. So that, though the course of the sun should be invariable, and never swerve from the equator ; yet the temperament of the air would be mutable nevertheless, according to the absence or presence, or various mixture of the other causes. The ancient philosophers, for many ages together, unanimously taught, that the torrid zone was not habitable. The reasons that they went upon were very specious and probable, till the experience of these latter ages evinced them to be erroneous. They argued from celestial causes only, the constant vicinity of the sun, and the directness of his rays ; never suspecting, that the body of the earth had so great an efficiency in the changes of the air ; and that then could be the coldest and rainiest season, the winter of the year, when the sun was the nearest of all, and steered directly over men's heads. Which is warning sufficient to deter any man from expecting such eternal serenity and halcyon days from so incompetent and partial a cause, as the constant course of the sun in the equinoctial circle. What general condition and temperament of air would follow upon that supposition we cannot possibly define ; for it is not caused by certain and regular motions, nor subject to mathematical calculations. But, if we may make a conjecture from the present constitution, we shall hardly wish for a perpetual equinox to save the charges of weather-glasses : for, it is very well known, that the months of March and September, the two equinoxes of our year, are the most windy and tem-

pestuous, the most unsettled and unequal of seasons in most countries of the world. Now if this notion of an uniform calm and serenity be false or precarious, then even the last supposed advantage, the *constant health and longevity* of men, must be given up also, as a groundless conceit: for this (according to the assertors themselves) doth solely, as an effect of nature, depend upon the other. Nay, further, though we should allow them their perpetual calm and equability of heat, they will never be able to prove, that therefore men would be so vivacious as they would have us believe. Nay, perhaps the contrary may be inferred, if we may argue from present experience: for the inhabitants of the torrid zone, who suffer the least and shortest recesses of the sun, and are within one step and degree of a perpetual equinox, are not only shorter lived (generally speaking) than other nations nearer the poles; but inferior to them in strength, and stature, and courage, and in all the capacities of the mind. It appears therefore, that the gradual vicissitudes of heat and cold are so far from shortening the thread of man's life, or impairing his intellectual faculties, that very probably they both prolong the one in some measure, and exalt and advance the other. So that still we do profess to adore the divine wisdom and goodness for this variety of seasons, for *seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter*, [Gen. viii.]

VIII. Come we now to consider the atmosphere, and the exterior frame and face of the globe, if we may find any tracks and footsteps of wisdom in the constitution of them. I need not now inform you, that the air is a thin fluid body, endued with elasticity or springiness, and capable of condensation and rarefaction; * and, should it be much more expanded or condensed than it naturally is, no animals could live and breathe: it is probable also that the vapours could not be duly raised and supported in it; which at once would deprive the earth of all its ornament and glory, of all its living inhabitants and vegetables too. But it is certainly known and demonstrated, that the con-

densation and expansion of any portion of the air is always proportional to the weight and pressure incumbent upon it: so that if the atmosphere had been either much greater or less than it is, as it might easily have been, it would have had in its lowest region on the surface of the earth a much greater density or tenuity of texture, and consequently have been unserviceable for vegetation and life. It must needs therefore be an intelligent Being that could so justly adapt it to those excellent purposes. It is concluded by astronomers, that the atmosphere of the moon hath no clouds nor rains; but a perpetual and uniform serenity: because nothing discoverable in the lunar surface is ever covered and absconded from us by the interposition of any clouds or mists, but such as rise from our own globe. Now, if the atmosphere of our earth had been of such a constitution, there could nothing, that now grows or breathes in it, have been formed or preserved; human nature must have been quite obliterated out of the works of creation. If our air had not been a springy elastical body, no animal could have exercised the very function of respiration; and yet the ends and uses of respiration are not served by that springiness, but by some other unknown and singular quality. † For the air, that in exhausted receivers of air-pumps is exhaled from minerals, and flesh, and fruits, and liquors, is as true and genuine as to elasticity and density, or rarefaction, as that we respire in; and yet this factitious air is so far from being fit to be breathed in, that it kills animals in a moment, even sooner than the very absence of all air, than a vacuum itself. All which do infer the most admirable providence of the Author of nature, who foreknew the necessity of rains and dews to the present structure of plants, and the uses of respiration to animals; and therefore created those correspondent properties in the atmosphere of the earth.

IX. In the next place let us consider the ample provision of waters, those inexhausted treasures of the ocean: (and,

† Mr. Boyle's second continuation of Physico-mechanical Experiments about the Air.

‡ *Et mare, quod late terrarum distinet oras.*

Lucrēt.

* See Mr. Boyle of the Air.

though some have grudged the great share that it takes of the surface of the earth, yet we shall propose this too as a conspicuous mark and character of the wisdom of God. For that we may not now say, that the vast Atlantic ocean is really greater riches, and of more worth to the world, than if it was changed into a fifth continent; and that the dry land is as yet much too big for its inhabitants; and that, before they shall want room by increasing and multiplying, there may be *new heavens and a new earth*: we dare venture to affirm, that these copious stores of waters are no more than necessary for the present constitution of our globe. For, is not the whole substance of all vegetables mere modified water? and consequently of all animals too; all which either feed upon vegetables, or prey upon one another. Is not an immense quantity of it continually exhaled by the sun, to fill the atmosphere with vapours and clouds, and feed the plants of the earth with the balm of dews, and the fatness of showers? It seems incredible at first hearing, that all the blood in our bodies should circulate in a trice, in a very few minutes; but, I believe it would be more surprising, if we knew the short and swift periods of the great circulation of water, that vital blood of the earth, which composeth and nourisheth all things. If we could but compute that prodigious mass of it that is daily thrown into the channel of the sea from all the rivers of the world; we should then know and admire how much is perpetually evaporated and cast again upon the continents to supply those innumerable streams. And indeed hence we may discover, not only the *use* and *necessity*, but the *cause* too of the vastness of the ocean. I never yet heard of any nation that complained they had too broad, or too deep, or too many rivers; or wished they were either smaller or fewer; they understand better than so, how to value and esteem those inestimable gifts of nature. Now, supposing that the multitude and largeness of rivers ought to continue as great as now, we can easily prove that the extent of the ocean could be no less than it is. For it is evident and necessary, (if we follow the most fair and probable hypothesis, that the origin of fountains is from vapours and

rain,) that the receptacle of waters, into which the mouths of all those rivers must empty themselves, ought to have so spacious a surface, that as much water may be continually brushed off by the winds and exhaled by the sun, as (besides what falls again in showers upon its own surface) is brought into it by all the rivers. Now the surface of the ocean is just so wide, and no wider: for, if more was evaporated than returns into it again, the sea would become less; if less was evaporated, it would grow bigger. So that, because since the memory of all ages it hath continued at a stand without considerable variation: and if it hath gained ground upon one country, hath lost as much in another; it must consequently be exactly proportioned to the present constitution of rivers. How rash therefore and vain are those busy projectors in speculation, that imagine they could recover to the world many new and noble countries, in the most happy and temperate climates, without any damage to the old ones, could this same mass of the ocean be lodged and circumscribed in a much deeper channel; and within narrower shores! For, by how much they would diminish the present extent of the sea, so much they would impair the fertility, and fountains, and rivers of the earth: because the quantity of vapours, that must be exhaled to supply all these, would be lessened proportionally to the bounds of the ocean; for the vapours are not to be measured from the bulk of the water, but from the space of the surface. So that this also doth infer the superlative wisdom and goodness of God, that he hath treasured up the waters in so deep and spacious a storehouse, [Psal. cxxiv.] *the place that he hath founded and appointed for them.* * But some men are out of love with the features and mien of our earth; they do not like this rugged and irregular surface, these precipices and valleys, and the gaping channel of the ocean.

* *Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse creatam
Naturam rerum, tanta est praeclara culpa.
Principio, quantum cunctis legibus impedit ingens,
Inde: evidens portum montes clypeoque forarum
Pescadore, tenent rufos, caeruleus pedales,
Et mare, quod late terrarum distinct oras.*

Lucret. lib. v.

This with them is deformity, and rather carries the face of a ruin, or a rude and indigested lump of atoms that casually convened so, than a work of divine artifice. They would have the vast body of a planet to be as elegant and round as a factitious globe represents it; to be every where smooth and equable, and as plain as the Elysian fields. Let us examine what weighty reasons they have to disparage the present constitution of nature in so injurious a manner. Why, if we suppose the ocean to be dry, and that we look down upon the empty channel from some higher region of the air, how horrid, and ghastly, and unnatural would it look! Now, admitting this supposition, let us suppose too that the soil of this dry channel were covered with grass and trees in manner of the continent, and then see what would follow. If a man could be carried asleep and placed in the very middle of this dry ocean, it must be allowed that he could not distinguish it from the inhabited earth. For if the bottom should be unequal, with shelves, and rocks, and precipices, and gulfs: these, being now appeared with a vesture of plants, would only resemble the mountains and valleys that he was accustomed to before. But very probably he would wake in a large and smooth plain: for though the bottom of the sea were gradually inclined and sloping from the shore to the middle, yet the additional acclivity, above what a level would seem to have, would be imperceptible in so short a prospect as he could take of it: so that, to make this man sensible what a deep cavity he was placed in, he must be carried so high in the air till he could see at one view the whole breadth of the channel, and so compare the depression of the middle with the elevation of the banks. But then a very small skill in mathematics is enough to instruct us, that, before he could arrive to that distance from the earth, all the inequality of surface would be lost to his view: the wide ocean would appear to him like an even and uniform plane, (uniform as to its level, though not as to light and shade,) though every rock of the sea was as high as the Pico of Teneriff. But, though we should grant that the dry gulf of the ocean would appear vastly hollow and horrible from the top of a high cloud, yet what

a way of reasoning is this from the freaks of imagination, and impossible suppositions? Is the sea ever likely to be evaporated by the sun, or to be emptied with buckets? Why then must we fancy this impossible dryness; and then upon that fictitious account calumniate nature, as deformed and ruinous, and unworthy of a divine Author? Is there then any physical deformity in the fabric of a human body, because our imagination can strip it of its muscles and skin, and shew us the scragged and knotty backbone, the gaping and ghastly jaws, and all the skeleton underneath? We have shewed before, that the sea could not be much narrower than it is, without a great loss to the world: and must we now have an ocean of mere flats and shallows, to the utter ruin of navigation, for fear our heads should turn giddy at the imagination of gaping abysses and unfathomable gulfs? But however, they may say, the sea-shores at least might have been even and uniform, not crooked and broken as they are into innumerable angles, and creeks, and inlets, and bays, without beauty or order, which carry the marks more of chance and confusion, than of the production of a wise Creator. And would not this be a fine bargain indeed? to part with all our commodious ports and harbours, which the greater the inlet is are so much the better, for the imaginary pleasure of an open and straight shore without any retreat or shelter from the winds: which would make the sea of no use at all as to navigation and commerce. But what apology can we make for the horrid deformity of rocks and crags, of naked and broken cliffs, of long ridges of barren mountains, in the convenientest latitudes for habitation and fertility, could but those rude heaps of rubbish and ruins be removed out of the way? We have one general and sufficient answer for all seeming defects or disorders in the constitution of land or sea; that we do not contend to have the earth pass for a paradise, or to make a very heaven of our globe; we reckon it only as the land of our peregrination, and aspire after. [Heb. xi.] *a better, and a celestial country*. It is enough, if it be so framed and constituted, that by a careful contemplation of it we have great reason to acknowledge and adore

divine wisdom and benignity of its Author. But, to wave this general reply, let the objectors consider, that these supposed irregularities must necessarily come to pass from the established laws of mechanism and the ordinary course of nature. For, supposing the existence of sea and mountains, if the banks of that sea must never be jagged and torn by the impetuous assaults or the silent underminings of waves; if violent rains and tempests must not wash down the earth and gravel from the tops of some of those mountains, and expose their naked ribs to the face of the sun; if the seeds of subterraneous minerals must not ferment, and sometimes cause earthquakes and furious eruptions of volcanos, and tumble down broken rocks, and lay them in confusion; then either all things must have been overruled miraculously by the immediate interposition of God, without any mechanical affections or settled laws of nature, or else the body of the earth must have been as fixed as gold, or as hard as adamant, and wholly unfit for human habitation. [Gen. i]. So that if it *was good* in the sight of God, that the present plants and animals, and human souls united to flesh and blood, should be upon this earth under a settled constitution of nature; these supposed inconveniences, as they were foreseen and permitted by the Author of that nature, as necessary consequences of such a constitution, so they cannot infer the least imperfection in his wisdom and goodness: and to murmur at them is as unreasonable as to complain that he hath made us men and not angels; that he hath placed us upon this planet, and not upon some other, in this or another system, which may be thought better than ours. Let them also consider, that this objected deformity is in our imaginations only, and not really in things themselves. There is no universal reason (I mean such as is not confined to human fancy, but will reach through the whole intellectual universe) that a figure by us called regular, which hath equal sides and angles, is absolutely more beautiful than any irregular one. All pulchritude is relative; and all bodies are truly and physically beautiful under all possible shapes and proportions, that are good in their kind, that are fit for their proper uses and ends of their

natures. We ought not then to believe, that the banks of the ocean are really deformed, because they have not the form of a regular bulwark; nor that the mountains are out of shape, because they are not exact pyramids or cones; nor that the stars are unskilfully placed, because they are not all situated at uniform distance. These are not natural irregularities, but with respect to our fancies only; nor are they incommodious to the true uses of life and the designs of man's being on the earth. And let them further consider, that these ranges of barren mountains, by condensing the vapours, and producing rains, and fountains, and rivers, give the very plains and valleys themselves that fertility they boast of; that those hills and mountains supply us and the stock of nature with a great variety of excellent plants. If there were no inequalities in the surface of the earth, nor in the seasons of the year, we should lose a considerable share of the vegetable kingdom: for all plants will not grow in an uniform level and the same temper of soil, nor with the same degree of heat. Nay, let them lastly consider, that to those hills and mountains we are obliged for all our metals, and with them for all the conveniences and comforts of life. To deprive us of metals is to make us mere savages; to change our corn or rice for the old Arcadian diet, our houses and cities for dens and caves, and our clothing for skins of beasts; it is to bereave us of all arts and sciences, of history and letters; nay, of revealed religion too, that inestimable favour of heaven: for, without the benefit of letters, the whole Gospel would be a mere tradition and old cabala, without certainty, without authority. Who would part with these solid and substantial blessings for the little fantastical pleasantness of a smooth uniform convexity and roundity of a globe? And yet the misfortune of it is, that the pleasant view of their imaginary globe, as well as the deformed spectacle of our true one, is founded upon impossible suppositions. For that equal convexity could never be seen and enjoyed by any man living. The inhabitants of such an earth could have only the short prospect of a little circular plane about three miles around them; though neither woods, nor hedges, nor artificial

banks should intercept it: which little too would appear to have an acclivity on all sides from the spectators; so that every man would have the displeasure of fancying himself the lowest, and that he always dwelt and moved in a bottom. Nay, considering that in such a constitution of the earth they could have no means nor instruments of mathematical knowledge, there is great reason to believe, that the period of the final dissolution might overtake them, ere they would have known or had any suspicion that they walked upon a round ball. Must we therefore, to make this convexity of the earth discernible to the eye, suppose a man to be lifted up a great height in the air, that he may have a very spacious horizon under one view? But then again, because of the distance, the convexity and gibbousness would vanish away; he would only see below him a great circular flat, as level, to his thinking, as the face of the moon. Are there then such ravishing charms in a dull unvaried flat, to make a sufficient compensation [Deut. xxxiii. 15.] *for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills?* Nay, we appeal to the sentence of mankind, *if a land of hills and valleys* has not more pleasure too and beauty than an uniform flat? which flat, if ever it may be said to be very delightful, is then only, when it is viewed from the top of a hill. * What were the Tempe of Thessaly, so celebrated in ancient story for their unparalleled pleasantness, but a vale divided with a river, and terminated with hills? Are not all the descriptions of poets embellished with such ideas; when they would represent any places of superlative delight, any blissful seats of the muses or the nymphs, any sacred habitations of gods or goddesses? They will never admit that a wide flat can be pleasant, no not in the very Elysian fields; † but these too must be diversified with depressed valleys and swelling ascents. They cannot imagine

‡ even paradise to be a place of pleasure, nor heaven itself to be § heaven without them. Let this therefore be ¶ another argument of the divine wisdom and goodness, that the surface of the earth is not uniformly convex, (as many think it would naturally have been, if mechanically formed by a chaos,) but distinguished with mountains and valleys, and furrowed from pole to pole with the deep channel of the sea; and that, because of the *το βελτιον*, it is better that it should be so.

Give me leave to make one short inference from what has been said, which shall finish this present discourse, and with it our task for the year. We have clearly discovered many final causes and characters of wisdom and contrivance in the frame of the inanimate world; as well as in the organical fabric of the bodies of animals. Now, from hence ariseth a new and invincible argument, that the present frame of the world hath not existed from all eternity. For such an uselessness of things, or a fitness of means to ends, as neither proceeds from the necessity of their beings, nor can happen to them by chance, doth necessarily infer that there was an intelligent Being, which was the author and contriver of that usefulness. We have formerly demonstrated, that the body of a man, which consists of an incomprehensible variety of parts, all admirably fitted for their peculiar functions and the conservation of the whole, could no more be formed fortuitously than the *Æneis* of Virgil, or any other long poem with good sense and just measures, could be composed by the casual combinations of letters. Now, to pursue this comparison; as it is utterly impossible to be believed, that such a poem may have been eternal, transcribed from copy to copy without any first author

Flowers worthy of paradise, which not nice art
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
Pour'd forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain.

Paradise Lost, book iv.

§ For earth hath this variety from heaven
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale.

Paradise Lost, book vi.

* Vide *Ælian*. Var. Hist. lib. iii.

† *At pater Anchises penitus convallæ virenti.*

Virg. Æn. vi.

Hec superate jugum.— Ibid.

Et tunulum capiti.— Ibid.

and original; so it is equally incredible and impossible, that the fabric of human bodies, which hath such excellent and divine artifice, and, if I may so say, such good sense and true syntax and harmonious measures in its constitution, should be propagated and transcribed from father to son without a first parent and creator of it. An eternal usefulness of things, an eternal good sense, cannot possibly be conceived without an eternal wisdom and understanding. But that can be no other than that eternal and omnipotent God; [Prov. iii.] *that by wisdom hath founded the earth, and by understanding hath established the heavens*: to whom be all honour, and glory, and praise, and adoration, from henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON V.

By RICHARD BENTLEY, D. D.

[Preached at the Public Commencement at Cambridge, July 5th, 1696.]

Of Revelation and the Messias.

1 PET. iii. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

By the *hope that is in us*, we do understand here, as in other places of Scripture, not only the bare hope strictly so called, but the faith too of a Christian. Whence it is, that in the Syriac version of the text, and in some ancient Latin copies, the word faith is added to the other; *the hope and the faith that is in you*. And indeed, if we consider hope as a natural passion, we shall find it to be always attended and ushered in by faith. For, it is certain there is no hope without some antecedent belief that the thing hoped for may come to pass; and the strength and steadiness of our hope is ever proportional to the measure of our faith. It appears therefore why the word hope in the text may with sufficient propriety of speech comprehend the whole faith of a Christian: and that, when the Apostle exhorts us to be ready always to answer every man that asks the

reason of our hope, it is the same, as if he enjoined us to be never unprepared nor unwilling to reply to any doubts or questions about the grounds of the Christian faith.

At the date of this epistle the whole world (with relation to the text) might be considered under one general division, Jews and Gentiles. First, the Jews, [Rom. iii. 2.] *to whom the oracles of God were committed*, and who from thence had the information and expectation of the Messias. These, when they asked a Christian the reason of his hope, were themselves already persuaded that the Messias would come: and the only controversy between them was, Whether Jesus was he? according to the message of John the Baptist, [Luke vii. 19.] *Was Jesus he that should come, or must they look for another?* Secondly, the Gentiles, who having no means of knowledge besides mere natural reason, could have no notions nor notices of this expected Messias: these therefore, when they demanded the reason of a Christian's hope, were first to be acquainted with the purpose and promise of God to send the Messias; were to be instructed about the reasons and designs of that great embassy: about his quality and office, and all the circumstances of his person: and then was the proper time to shew, that Jesus was he; that the description of the Messias was truly exhibited and represented in his character; and the ancient prophecies all accomplished in his actions and events.

It is not for nothing that the Apostle so presseth this advice in the text, *Be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you*: as if he had foretold, that there would be no age of the Christian world, wherein this preparation would be superfluous. It hath pleased the divine wisdom never yet to leave Christianity wholly at leisure from opposers; but to give its professors that perpetual exercise of their industry and zeal. And who can tell, if, without such adversaries to rouse and quicken them, they might not in long tract of time have grown remiss in the duties, and ignorant in the doctrines of religion? Perhaps before this time even some of the records of it might have perished by men's negligence; as the Jews had like to have lost their law, if divine Providence had not

preserved one copy of it in the temple. It is [Matth. xiii. 25.] *while men sleep, while they live in peace and security, and have no enemies to contest with, that the great enemy comes and sows tares among the wheat.* But, of all the ages since the coming of Christ, I suppose this present has least reason to complain for want of work and employment in defence of religion. Here are not only the two parties in the text, Jews and Gentiles, still in the world to engage with; but even in the midst of Christianity are the most dangerous designs formed against it; as if our Saviour's prediction of particular families were to be verified too of the whole church, [Matth. x. 36.] *that its worst enemies should be they of its own household.*

There are a sort of persons baptized indeed into the Christian faith, and educated in the profession of it: but in secret, I wish I might say so, nay even openly they oppose and blaspheme it: repudiating at once the whole authority of revelation, and debasing the sacred volumes to the rank of ordinary books of history and ethics. The being of God and a Providence they profess to believe; to acknowledge a difference between good and evil; to be verily persuaded of another life to come; and to have their expectations of that state, as their behaviour is in this. Nay, even the whole system of Christian morals they can willingly embrace; but not as a collection of divine statutes and ordinances sent us by an express from heaven, but only as useful rules of life, discoverable by plain reason, and agreeable to natural religion. So that they cannot see the mighty occasion that should invite even the eternal Son of God from the bosom of the Father, to act so mean and calamitous a part upon the stage of this sorry world. What need of so great a master to read mankind lectures of morals, which they might easily learn without any teacher? It is true, they are often told of some sublime mysterious doctrines delivered by him, which they own would never have been thought of by natural reason. But then, that is so far from recommending to them the importance of his errand from heaven, that for that very

reason they deny the truth of his message. For whatever comes imperiously in the name of divine mystery, and soars above the pitch of human knowledge; whatsoever things they cannot fathom and grasp through all the causes, designs, modes and relations of them, as the notion of the Messiah, his incarnation, mediation, satisfaction; all these they reject and explode, as incomprehensible to pure reason, which they set up as the only principle and measure of belief.

In all this, these persons act the part, and place themselves in the condition of Gentiles, whom we may imagine, in the text, *to ask the reason of a Christian's hope*; since the whole body of these men's religion is no more than what even heathens attained to: the modern Deism being the very same with old philosophical Paganism, only aggravated and damned with the additional crime of apostacy from the faith. But, besides this, these very persons will on other occasions personate the Jews too, those other enquirers supposed in the text, and dispute with Jewish objections against the Christian religion; though they no more believe the matter of those objections, than the thing they object against; like Celsus and Julian of old, that gathered arguments against the Christians from all the different sects and hypotheses of philosophy, though inconsistent one argument with another; and brought objections too from the Old Testament, which they did not believe, against the New one, which they were engaged by all methods to oppose.

In our present discourse, therefore, we shall endeavour to refute these modern adversaries under their double shape and character: First, as they are mere Deists or Pagans, renouncing all revelation, and the very notion of the Messiah; and, Secondly, as they fight under Jewish colours: so as admitting there be a promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, yet ~~men~~ ought to reject the person of Jesus, and still to wait for another.

I. And, first, we shall consider them in the quality of Deists and disciples of mere natural reason. We profess ourselves as much concerned, and as truly as themselves are, for the use and autho-

rity of reason in controversies of faith. We look upon right reason as the native lamp of the soul, placed and kindled there by our Creator, to conduct us in the whole course of our judgments and actions. True reason, like its divine Author, never is itself deceived, nor ever deceives any man. * Even revelation itself is not shy nor unwilling to ascribe its own first credit and fundamental authority to the test and testimony of reason. Sound-reason is the touchstone to distinguish that pure and genuine gold from baser metals; revelation truly divine, from imposture and enthusiasm: so that the Christian religion is so far from declining or fearing the strictest trials of reason, that it every where appeals to it; is defended and supported by it, and indeed cannot continue, in the Apostle's description, [James i. 27.] *pure and undefiled* without it. It is the benefit of reason alone, under the Providence and Spirit of God, that we ourselves are at this day a reformed Orthodox Church: that we departed from the errors of Popery, and that we knew too where to stop; neither running into the extravagancies of fanaticism, nor sliding into the indifferency of libertinism. Whatsoever therefore is inconsistent with natural reason, can never be justly imposed as an article of faith. That the same body is in many places at once, that plain bread is not bread; such things, though they be said with never so much pomp, and claim to infallibility, we have still greater authority to reject them, as being contrary to common sense and our natural faculties; as subverting the foundations of all faith, even the grounds of their own credit, and all the principles of civil life.

So far are we from contending with our adversaries about the dignity and authority of reason; but then we differ with them about the exercise of it, and the extent of its province. For the Deists there stop, and set bounds to their faith, where reason, their only guide, does not lead the way further, and walk along before them. We on the contrary, as [Deut. xxxiv.] Moses was shewn by divine power a true sight of the promised land, though himself could not pass over to it; so we think reason may receive from revelation some further

discoveries and new prospects of things, and be fully convinced of the reality of them: though itself cannot pass on, nor travel those regions; cannot penetrate the fund of those truths, nor advance to the utmost bounds of them. For there is certainly a wide difference between what is contrary to reason, and what is superior to it, and out of its reach. To give an instance in created nature, how many things are there whose being we cannot doubt of, though unable to comprehend the manner of their being so? That the human soul is vitally united to the body by a reciprocal commerce of action and passion; this we all consciously feel and know, and our adversaries will affirm it; let them tell us then what is the chain, the cement, the magnetism, what they will call it, the invisible tie of that union, whereby matter and an incorporeal mind, things that have no similitude nor alliance to each other, can so sympathize by a mutual league of motion and sensation? No, they will not pretend to that; for they can frame no conceptions of it. They are sure there is such an union, from the operations and effects; but the cause and the manner of it are too subtle and secret to be discovered by the eye of reason: it is mystery, it is divine magic, it is natural miracle. If then in created beings they are content with us to confess their ignorance of the modes of existence, without doubting of things themselves; have not we much more reason to be humble and modest in speculations about the essence of God; about the reasons of his counsels, and the ways of his actions? Yes certainly, under those circumstances we may believe with reason even things above and beyond reason.

For example: If we have sure ground to believe that such a book is the revelation of God; and we find in it propositions expressed in plain words, of a determinate sense without ambiguity, so as they cannot be otherwise interpreted, by any just metaphor or fair construction allowed in common language; we say we have sufficient reason to assent to those propositions, as divine doctrines and infallible truths, so far as they are declared there, though perhaps we cannot ourselves comprehend, nor demonstrate to others the reasons and the

manner of them. Neither is this an easy credulity, or unworthy of the most cautious and morose searcher of truth. For observe, we do not say, any thing incomprehensible to reason is separate and alone a proper object of belief; but as it is supported and established by some other known and comprehensible truth: as if Abraham had been told by some ordinary man, that in his and Sarah's decrepitude he should be blessed with a son; this promise, so alone, without its basis to stand on, could not have challenged his assent, because the thing was impossible in the way of nature; but since it was God Almighty, (Matt. xix. 26.) *with whom all things are possible*, that was the author of that promise, by the mediation of that certain truth, the veracity and omnipotence of God, without hesitation he believed, and so obtained the glory to be (Rom. iv. 11.) *father of the faithful*. And upon the same grounds the blessed Virgin gave credit to the salutation of the angel, though the message in itself seemed impossible to reason. So true it is, that reason itself warrants us to proceed and advance by faith, even beyond the sphere and regions of reason. We agree then with our adversaries about the authority of reason; but we dissent about the exercise of it, and the bounds of its jurisdiction. We believe even the abstrusest mysteries of the Christian religion, of which mysteries perhaps we can assign no reasons, but for our belief we assign a good one; because they are plainly taught in the word of God, who can neither err nor deceive. And this we affirm to be a reasonable conclusion, though it carry us even to the confines of heaven, beyond the limits of reason. But, if the Deists think to oblige us to give a natural account of those mysteries, without the authority of Scripture; for that we must beg their excuse. We will argue from strict reason, as much as they can pretend to; but we must not submit that our adversaries shall confine us to improper topics and impossible ways of proof.

It appears therefore, that though we should decline and despair to give any account at all of the reasons and methods of God's counsel in the mission of his Son, and only appeal to the sentence of Scripture, yet the Deists

ought to be satisfied with that proof, since the doctrine is so expressly taught in the oracles of God. But, besides this, what if even natural light shall discover to us some faint, but yet certain views of that mysterious instance of divine wisdom and goodness; and exhibit to us a rational account, why the Son of God should condescend to be our Mediator and Redeemer? But, before we engage in this attempt, let it be lawful to implore the candour of our friends: if, while we endeavour to win over our enemies, we may seem to some, to do too little; or perhaps to others, to venture too far, and to advance beyond our lines. To discern then some reasons of this wonderful mystery, we must take our prospect from that highest mountain of nature, from the first creation, and origin of human race.

God, who at the beginning viewed all the works of his hands, (Gen. i. 31.) and *behold, all things were very good*; made man also upright and complete, without any defect in his whole composition; without any original perverseness of soul, or false bias of will or judgment; without any natural obliquity or enormity of inclinations. He made him an intelligent being, to know God and himself; to understand and feel present happiness, and to secure it by consideration and contrivance for the future. He endowed him with liberty of mind, that he might act, not of necessity, nor blind instinct like the brutes; but with consciousness and voluntary choice. He implanted in him diverse appetites and affections, all useful instruments of his happiness, if fitly employed: and none vicious and culpable radically, and in their whole nature, but then only, when they are applied to wrong objects, or in right ones are raised or sunk beside their due temper and measure. I say it again, for the justification of our Creator, that not one of the simple affections of the soul, no not concupiscence, hatred, anger, revenge, are in themselves criminal and sinful. Some of the affections, it is true, have very bad names; but those are either mere excesses of simple passions, or else mixed and compound ones, which have no proper real essence, but are only notional terms; as *envy*, for example, a very bad thing indeed; but it is

an evil of our own product, and not of God's creating. For the real constituent parts of it are hatred and grief, very useful and lawful affections; but the evil of it is our own; when we entertain that hatred and grief at the good that befalls others; which is what we express by the complex name of envy.

God therefore having so created man, in every capacity pure and perfect, might justly require of him that he should maintain and preserve this original rectitude; that in all his desires, designs and actions, he should constantly adhere to the dictates of reason and nature; so as the least deviation would make him obnoxious to God's displeasure, and nothing less than complete obedience recommend him to his favour: according to the terms proposed to Cain, (Gen. iv. 7) *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lies at the door.* God, I say, might expect and require of man such a perfect obedience to the law of nature; because it was both reasonable and possible for man to perform it. Reasonable it was, because every statute of that law promotes the true interest and felicity of mankind, even in the very performance. It is true, in the present posture of human affairs, a man's duty is frequently inconsistent with his temporal interest. *But from the beginning it was not so:* neither would it be now, if the whole world at once could be just and innocent. For it is not my keeping the law, but another's transgressing it, that involves me in any misery. The scope and tendency of the law itself is always mine and every man's advantage. For it is not a thing foreign and alien to our nature, imposed on us purely to try our obedience, but it all results from our very frame and constitution. The general preservation of man's natural good is the sole root and fountain of the moral: the universal profit and pleasure, the public happiness of human life, gives being and denomination to every virtue and vice; and the true rules and directions to preserve and secure that happiness make up the whole volume, the code and pandect of the law of nature. Without doubt then it was reasonable to obey where nothing was commanded

us but to pursue our own interest; nothing forbidden us but, not to do ourselves harm. And secondly, it was possible for man to perform that entire obedience. For since, as we have proved before, all his natural faculties are right and good, and the law itself accommodated and proportioned to those faculties, there appears no necessary intrinsic impediment, why he may not adequately observe it. If every particular precept be possible to be done, it is not absolutely impossible to fulfil the universal. And methinks they, that on other accounts acknowledge that God requires such perfect obedience upon the terms of the law of nature, should be very averse from believing that there is a natural and fundamental insufficiency in man to perform it. For certainly the just God cannot be so importunate and unreasonable a master as to enjoin us what is physically impossible: *to expect to reap where he has not sown, to require bricks without allowance of straw.*

But then, though there was no such original and natural disability in man, yet there arose a moral and circumstantial one; an accidental incapacity supervening to his nature, an impossibility from event, that ever any person from the beginning of the world to the last period of it (always excepting the man Christ Jesus) should be wholly pure and free from the contagion of sin. For, our first parents having fallen from their native state of innocence, the tincture of evil, like an hereditary disease, infected all their posterity: and the leaven of sin having once corrupted the whole mass of mankind, all the species ever after would be soured and tainted with it; the vicious ferment perpetually diffusing and propagating itself through all generations. For, let us but consider the state of human life; first, a perpetual conversation among evil examples, and the strongest principle of our nature, imitation; and then, the ignorance and prejudices of childhood, the fervour and temerity of youth, the force and the frequency of temptations, and the narrow dubious confines between virtue and vice; and we may pronounce it impossible, that any man should so govern his steps through all the lubricous paths

of life, as never once to slip and fall from his duty. Agreeably to the testimony of Scripture, *which hath concluded all under sin*, Gal. iii. 22. and again, (1 John i. 8.) *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*; and again, (Rom. iii. 9, 23.) *Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*. (Rom. iii. 19.) *Every mouth then be stopped; and all the world must plead guilty* before the tribunal of God; *for by the deeds of the law* (the law of nature as well as of Moses) *no flesh can be justified in his sight*. It is evident then from the principles of pure reason, beside the authority of Scripture, that upon the Deist's hypothesis, upon the terms of natural religion, no salvation can be obtained; no life and immortality can be expected: for, that being the free offer and favour of God, he might justly set what price he pleased upon it, even the greatest that we can possibly pay; nothing less than entire obedience, than unspotted innocence, than consummate virtue.

Thus far then even reason evinceth, and holds the lamp to revelation. Some means of reconciliation between God and man, the judge and the offender, must be contrived; some vicarious satisfaction to justice, and model of a new covenant; or else the whole bulk of mankind are for ever unhappy. And surely to prevent that, to retrieve a perishing world, was a weighty concern; even of greater importance than the very creating it, and more worthy of the care and consult of Heaven; I say, the care of Heaven, for, alas! here on earth what expedient could man find out? *How could dust and ashes take upon him to speak unto the Lord?* Could any of the sons of Adam presume to be advocate for the rest? himself one of the criminals, himself in want of another advocate? And what friend knew we at the court of heaven, of that high power and favour with God, as to offer his intercession? or so wonderfully kind to us, as to pay our satisfaction? We must freely own to the Deist, that here reason was at a stand; even nature herself languished between hope and despair; and, in the style of the Apostle, (Rom. viii. 22.)

the whole creation travelled in pain together; when behold, (what revelation hath informed and assured us of,) the eternal Son of the Almighty, (Heb. i. 3.) *the brightness of the paternal glory, and the express image of his substance*, even he vouchsafed to be our patron and mediator; to take our nature upon him, and to dwell among men; to fulfil that law of righteousness wherein we were deficient; to bear our guilt and our burden upon himself, and to offer his most precious blood as an expiation for our offences, as the seal of a new covenant better than the law of nature; a covenant of more gracious terms, terms of repentance and remission of sins; so that if we truly believe in him, and sincerely endeavour to observe his commands, our imperfect righteousness, through the merits of his sufferings, shall be imputed, accepted and rewarded as if it were an entire obedience to the strict law of works and of natural perfection.

And now I dare presume to ask even our adversaries themselves, what flaws or fallacies they can shew in all this. If it be true then, that reason itself discovers such absolute necessity of some way of reconciliation between God and man; and if it was necessary for man, as being the party concerned, to know the particular way that God did approve and accept of; and if mere reason could never find that out, but revelation alone must and ought to inform us; and lastly, if such revelation be actually made, attested, and promulgated to the world, what pretence is there left, why we should not believe and acquiesce in it? if, upon examination, it bear all the marks of true revelation; if it contain nothing unworthy of itself, and of the wisdom and goodness of its author.

And, is not the economy of man's salvation, as it is set forth in holy Scriptures, every way agreeable to that divine character? No, if we ask our adversaries, it is an improper and unequal method; it is inconsistent with the justice and impartiality of God. *Res Jupiter omnibus idem*. God, say they, if he had designed such an universal benefit for mankind, would have exhibited it equally and indifferently to every age and nation alike: but the conditions of

salvation proposed in the gospel are incompetent and much too narrow ; being restrained to those times and countries alone, that can hear of the fame of Jesus, and believe in his person. And what becomes then of all the former ages of men before he was born ? what of those remote nations ever since, that could have no intelligence of him, nor hear the least tidings of Judea and Jerusalem ? Must all those myriads of souls perish for invincible ignorance, for want of impossible faith ? [Rom. x. 14.] *For how could they believe on him of whom they had not heard ? and how could they hear without a preacher ? And why should the God of the whole earth, the God that is no respecter of persons, no, nor of nations, be so unaccountably kind, so unjustly fond and partial, to any single country ; much less to a little obscure people, the Jews, scarce heard of in the rest of the world till they were captives and slaves in it ; and withdraw his paternal love from so many other nations, much more considerable, and more worthy of his providence ?* (Rom. iii. 29.) *Is he God of the Jews only ? is he not also of the Gentiles ?*

This way of discourse we may expect from the Deists ; and I hope, according to the advice of the text, we are both able and ready to give a reply. For, first, as to that imagined partiality of God, in preferring any one country, before the rest of the world, to be the land of Christ's nativity ; what a poor and contemptible cavil ! for, upon supposition that the Messiah of God was to take human nature upon him, and be born of a woman, must he not of necessity be born in some one particular country, exclusively to all the rest ? And is not that then a ridiculous objection against any single country, that may equally be urged against all whatsoever ?

Neither was it mere fondness in the Deity, that he chose the obscure land of Palestine for the birthplace of his Son, rather than Greece or Italy, or Asia, the theatres of art and learning, and the seats of empire : for not to mention Abraham and the Patriarchs, whose singular faith and piety justly obtained of God that their posterity should have (Rom. ix. 4.) *adoption and the glory,*

and the covenants and the promises, and the consanguinity of Christ ; it appears also from event, that the circumstances of that nation were of all others the most suitable to the design of the Messias. For, since it was fit and necessary that prophecies should foretel of him long before his coming ; that his pedigree and extraction should be accurately deduced through a long series of ancestors, and other such marks be assigned of him, that men might know, this was he : what more proper to those purposes than the state of the Jews, that peculiar people, secluded and distinguished one tribe from another, and the whole from all the rest of mankind, by the very frame of their polity ? so that the genealogies were less confused, the histories and prophecies more faithfully recorded, and the accomplishment of all more certain and illustrious than they could have been in any other nation upon earth ; all of which, within that long compass of time, were blended together by mutual commerce and mutual conquest, and other omnifarious of mixture and confusion.

And then, as to that other surmise, that God would have proposed fair and equal means of general salvation, and not upon such narrow and insufficient terms as an actual faith in the person of Jesus ; a condition impossible to the much greater part of mankind : we acknowledge it to be true, infallibly true ; faith in Christ Jesus the only way to salvation since the preaching of the Gospel : so as whosoever rejects that when it is duly declared to him, and refuses his assent and obedience to it, can have no portion in the kingdom of heaven. But for those that never once heard of the Lord of life, that is an undecided case which we do not determine. For who has authority to give sentence, where God and Scripture are silent ? Thus far we are assured there, that let the future condition of those be as God pleases, at least he will not condemn them for invincible ignorance : (Rom. ii. 11, 12.) *for there is no respect of persons with him ; but as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law.* The meaning whereof is, that the Gentile world shall not be judged and condemned for the breach

of the law of Moses, which never was given them; but for sins against the law of nature, and the common light of conscience. We may infer then by parity of argument, that as *many as shall sin without the Gospel, shall perish without the Gospel*; that is, not because they believed not in Jesus, whom they had not the least notice of: but they will be tried and sentenced for sins against natural reason, for things within their power and capacity: [Rom. i. 18, 20, 21.] *because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; because they held the truth in unrighteousness, so that they are without excuse.*

But, if the Deist shall still insist that though we have justified God from the calumny, as if he would condemn the Gentiles for want of impossible faith, yet still he maintains it to be unjust and incredible, that while one small part of mankind enjoys the favour of the Gospel, all under the state of nature shall have the hard measure of *summum jus*; must all be damned by rigid inflexible justice, without equity or mercy, without any act of pardon, or the least room for repentance: if he will rather obstinately believe, or hope, or wish, that *the God of tender compassions, who loveth all things that he hath made, who will not require much where little has been given, cannot be so extreme with the Gentile world as to mark all that is done amiss, and yet to slight and overlook those shining examples of virtue not unfrequent among them*: if this be all he sticks at, God forbid that on this single account he should exclude himself from the communion of faith. We can allow him this opinion, as at worst a charitable error; as some indication of a large heart, and a generous love of mankind. But then he must always remember, that even those virtuous heathens, whom he would so gladly place in some part of heaven, can be saved on no other account than by the merits and mediation of Jesus their saviour. For without his satisfaction there is no remission of sins nor acceptance of repentance; and without remission of sins (Rom. iii. 20.) *by the deeds of the law and natural righteousness no flesh can be justified in the sight of God.* They are saved therefore, if they be saved at all, by the sole benefit of Christ, though in this life, they

could not know nor thank their benefactor. For though they lived in the earliest ages of time, long before his incarnation, yet even then they might be [1 Pet. i. 20.] *purified by the blood of the Lamb, manifested indeed in latter times, but pre-ordained before the foundation of the world*: so that from the first origin of it he might extend and impart, to all that were worthy, the efficacy of his merits, and the privileges of faith and grace, and a share in the inheritance of glory and immortality.

II. And now we may expect that our adversaries will put off the garb and character of Deists, and make a new attempt for the fortune of the day, under the arms and conduct of the Jews.

It must be granted on all hands, that the Messiah, whensoever he is manifested to the world, must appear in that very manner as the Jewish prophets describe him. All the characters must hit and correspond one to another; the same features, the same lineaments visible in both; the one the shadow and picture, and the other the substance. Now, say they, it is evident from the prophets, that the Messiah is to be temporal prince, to sit on the throne of David his royal ancestor, and to make Jerusalem the seat of an universal and perpetual empire. But the character of Jesus is as different from this description, as a stable from a palace. It is true, we Christians endeavour to shew a similitude between them by figurative interpretations of Scripture; which we call the spiritual and mystical sense, but they call arbitrary and precarious, as having no foundation in the native and naked letter, which is not to be racked and wrested from its obvious meaning, little credit being to be given to such extorted confessions.

Thus far our objectors. But I suppose the prophetic language and character is better understood than that this surmise should pass without a just answer. Indeed, if it were in this case alone that the expressions of the prophets need a figurative interpretation, the exception might appear fair and plausible: but it cannot be denied, that on many other occasions, besides the matter of the Messiah, their discourse (after the genius of the eastern nations) is thick set with metaphor and allegory:

the same bold comparisons and dithyrambic liberty of style every where occur. Which is an easy and natural account (besides the more secret reasons that the Holy Spirit might have) why the kingdom of the Messiah, though really spiritual and not of this world, is so often dressed and painted by them with the glories of secular empire. For when the Spirit of God came upon them, and breathed a new warmth and vigour through all the powers of the body and soul, when by the influx of divine light the whole scene of Christ's heavenly kingdom was represented to their view, so that their hearts were ravished with joy, and their imaginations turgid and pregnant with the glorious ideas: then surely, if ever, their style would be strong and lofty, full of allusions to all that is great and magnificent in the kingdoms of this world. But then, in other passages of the same prophets, as it were on purpose to hint to us the true meaning of the former, the Messiah is described plainly, without poetical colours, *to be a person of low condition; to have no form nor comeliness in him; a man acquainted with sorrows, and numbered among transgressors;* and by other characters so clear and express, that some of the Jewish rabbies, to elude so strong a conviction, have maintained and propagated an absurd opinion, as if two Messias were foretold by the prophets; the one a triumphant monarch, the other an unfortunate and afflicted person. What will not perverse and refractory minds take hold of, rather than submit to an unwelcome truth?

It is evident then, that the kingdom of Christ, so magnified in the prophetic style, is a spiritual kingdom. And yet, to be free and ingenuous, we must own that the whole nation of the Jews mistook the meaning of those passages. Even our Saviour's own disciples were not exempt from the common error. And the whole posterity of that people are pertinacious in it to this day; which to many is a mighty prejudice against the credit of the Gospel. What! as if it were such a matter of astonishment, that they obstinately adhere to the literal sense, which promises them a temporal kingdom, with worldly honours and pleasures! an interpretation both spe-

cious in itself, and agreeable to their proud hopes and carnal apprehensions, which are miserably defeated and disappointed in Jesus. There seems to be nothing so very unnatural and unaccountable in this. But then that very disappointment, so far is it from being an objection, that, to a sagacious mind and uncorrupt judgment, itself is a convincing proof that he was truly the Messiah. For let us reflect upon the state of those times. It is certain in fact, that the whole nation was possessed with an inveterate persuasion that the Messiah was then a coming; and it is as certain, that Jesus the son of Mary professed himself that Messiah. Let us argue now upon human reasons, and the common principles of action. If he was not the true Messiah, we are then to consider him as an ordinary Jew, of mean quality and education. Now, to give any tolerable account why such a one should pretend himself to be the Messiah, there are but two ways possible: either he was acted by ambitious designs, which he hoped to compass by that imposture; or by a complexional and natural enthusiasm, verily imagining himself to be the Messiah. I suppose I scarce need to say, that both these suppositions are fully confuted by every word and action of his life. But, what I now observe is this, that upon either of those principles, whether ambition or enthusiasm, he would certainly have acted the part of the Messiah in such a character as men then ascribed to him; according to the popular expectation, and the received notion of those times. Now the whole nation expected that the Messiah was to be a great general, to rescue them from the Roman power, and *to restore the kingdom to Israel*. It is certain then, that upon either of these two motives he would have blown the trumpet to rebellion, and attempted their deliverance. Ambition would have animated him to it, as the only way to his hopes and wishes. Or, if enthusiasm had inspired him, what would he not have promised and assumed to himself? *To fight the battles of the Lord; to execute vengeance upon the heathen; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron*. Such were the designs of Barcocab and some other impostors of old:

setting up to be the Messias, they put their followers in arms, and proclaimed liberty to the people. Not so the blessed Jesus: but, when the multitude would have made him their king, he withdrew himself even by miracle to avoid it. He did not summon to arms, but to repentance and newness of life. He had a kingdom indeed; *but not of this earthly Jerusalem, but of that which is above.* He was truly their deliverer; but not from the Roman yoke, but from the more slavish yoke of the law, from the more wretched bondage to sin and death. Was this the air and language of ambition? Was this the mien and spirit of enthusiasm? Nay rather, does not nature herself cry out and declare, that for one of his low condition and vulgar education, to profess himself the Messias in so surprising a manner, in a character so unthought of, by an interpretation of prophecies so spiritual and divine, so infinitely better than the literal meaning, against the universal prejudice of the nation, and the hopes and solicitations of his very followers, was certainly a thing more than human; an invincible testimony that he was really the Christ, and *his doctrine from God and not of man.*

But our adversaries have another objection still behind; and our answer thereto will put an end both to it and to the present discourse. And this objection is borrowed from the law of Moses; which, say they, having a promise of eternity annexed to it, to be an *everlasting covenant, a perpetual statute, a covenant of an everlasting priesthood,* ought of necessity to be continued and confirmed by the true Messias: whereas Jesus endeavoured to abolish it and thereby wholly subverted the credit of his own pretensions. But we answer in our Saviour's declaration, (Matth. v. 17.) *that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.* We are to distinguish then between the moral part of the Mosaic law, and the political and ceremonial. As to the rights and ceremonies, it is apparent they had no intrinsic nor moral holiness in them, no natural tendency to promote the happiness of men; nay rather they were inconvenient and grievous, *a yoke of bondage and servile discipline, which none were able to bear.* Even the rewards

and penalties, which enforced their observation, did not naturally flow and result from them, as effects from proper causes; but they were miraculously added to them by the sole virtue of the divine promise. It is true, they were fit and proper for the ends of their institution; to be types and shadows of better things to come; to preserve the people from idolatry, by allowing no intercourse nor commerce with other nations. But, it is evident for that very reason as well as many more, that those ceremonies were neither calculated for eternity, nor modelled for mankind in common: so that when the reasons of their sanction no longer continued; when the things they typically represented were come to pass; when *the wall of partition was to be removed,* and, according to the prophecies, *all nations to be called to Christ, and the ends of the earth to be his possession;* they must needs be antiquated and abolished, like scaffolds that are removed when the buildings are finished; since under that new state none of them had any further use, and several of them became impossible to be observed. And so for the political institutions of Moses, it is plain they were accommodated to the circumstances of affairs, and the necessities of time and place; not absolutely the very best, but the best that those ages of the world and the genius of that people would bear. As for instance, the toleration of polygamy and causeless divorces; these were indulged them, not as most pleasing to their lawgiver, but (Matth. ix. 8.) *because of the hardness of their hearts,* in the words of our Saviour; because they were too stiff-necked and head-strong to admit of a shorter bridle. These civil ordinances therefore, when better precepts were once proposed and accepted in their place, must of necessity drop and die of themselves, and become obsolete without any repeal: just as the temporary edicts in war, and the agreements of the cartel, do expire of their own accord, when the peace is concluded. But then the moral part of the law of Moses, which is the sap and marrow, the soul and substance of the whole, that indeed is of eternal and universal obligation. But then who can say that this is abrogated and can-

celled by Jesus? So far from that, that every branch of it is ingrafted and incorporated into his Gospel. In this best of senses therefore the Mosaic law is confirmed and fulfilled by our Saviour. For morality is a thing immutable; and, unless human nature itself should be new moulded by our Maker, vice and virtue must be always what they have been. So foolish was the cavil of the Deists against our Saviour's descent from heaven; because he gave no other lectures of morals, than what nature and reason had taught before. Nay, if he had taught us the reverse of those morals, this had been an objection indeed. But in that even the divinity of his doctrine most eminently appears; that the finger of God upon the tables of our hearts, and the pens of the inspired writers in the volume of the Gospel, have prescribed us one and the same lesson. As for us, whose employment it is to teach that lesson to others, let us but express it also in our own lives and conversations; let us but add that credit to our doctrine, that reputation to our profession: so may we expect to bring over all our adversaries to the truth and power of religion; so may we expect, when we give the account of our talents, to be received with that blessed approbation, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Master.*

SERMON VI.

By SAMUEL CLARK, D.D.

Of Faith in God.

HEB. xi. 6.

But without Faith, it is impossible to please him: For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

THE foregoing chapter is a very earnest and affectionate exhortation to the duty of faith. (Ver. 22.) *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* (Ver. 23.) *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without waver-*

ing. (Ver. 37.) *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry: Now the just shall live by faith.* That this exhortation might not be ineffectual, for want of men's clearly understanding what the nature of the duty was, to which they were here so earnestly exhorted; the apostle, in the 1st verse of this chapter, proceeds to define distinctly what faith is, and wherein it consists. *Faith, saith he, is the substance of things hoped for, (in the original it is, the firm and assured expectation of things hoped for,) the evidence of things not seen.* And what those things are, which being not seen by sense, are yet made manifest by faith, he declares in the words of the text. They are, saith he, the being of God, and the rewards of the life to come. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* There has prevailed in modern times, a very different and enthusiastic notion of faith; as if faith, under the gospel, was nothing but a confident reliance upon the merits of Christ, to do all that for us, which he on the contrary expressly requires that we should do for ourselves. When we have heartily endeavoured to obey the commandments of God; and have performed our duty really and sincerely, though very imperfectly; to rely them upon the merits and intercession of Christ, for the acceptance of those imperfect though sincere endeavours; this is indeed the duty, and the comfort of a Christian, but it is not what the scripture usually calls faith. Faith is that firm belief of things at present not seen; that conviction upon the mind, of the truth of the promises and threatenings of God made known in the gospel; of the certain reality of the rewards and punishments of the life to come; which enables a man, in opposition to all the temptations of a corrupt world, to obey God, in expectation of an invisible reward hereafter. This is that faith, which in scripture is always represented as a moral virtue, nay as the principal moral virtue, and the root and spring of all other virtues; because it is an act, not of the understanding only, but also and chiefly of

the will, so to consider impartially, to approve and embrace the doctrine of the gospel, as to make it the great rule of our life and actions. By this faith it is, that we must be justified; and by this it is, that the antients, whose example is celebrated in this eleventh chapter, *obtained*, as the apostle expresses it, a *good report*. The faith of Abraham was, that *he looked for a city which hath foundations*, even the heavenly Jerusalem spoken of in the prophecies, *whose builder and maker is God*, (ver. 10.) The faith of the other patriarchs was that *confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth*, they declared plainly that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly (ver. 13, 16.) The faith of Moses was, that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward; and endured, as seeing him who is invisible (ver. 35, 36, 37.) The faith of the martyrs was, that they chose to be tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection (ver. 35.) This is a very easy and intelligible notion of faith; and such a notion, as shows plainly, how faith is not a mere speculative act of the understanding, but a substantial practical moral virtue.

It is true, this is not indeed the only sense of the word, *faith*, in scripture; but it is the principal and most important sense of it. As may appear by considering, that all the variety of significations, in which the word is used in different places of scripture, may properly be reduced, for memory and distinctness sake, to these which follow. 1st, The word, *faith*, in some places signifies that earnest trust and confidence in the power of God, to which in the apostles' times was annexed the gift of working miracles. Thus (Matt. xvii. 20.) *if ye have faith* (says our Lord to his apostles) *as a grain of mustard seed*; (if ye have that trust in God, that particular kind of faith or dependence on him, that assured reliance on his power without doubt or wavering, required of you peculiarly at this time; if you have this faith, though ever so small in comparison, answer-

able in any measure to your present office and advantages;) *ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove*. This, was a faith required of the apostles at that particular time, and of them only. 2dly, In other passages, the word, *faith*, signifies the duty of veracity, faithfulness, or truth. Thus (Matt. xxiii. 23.) *ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law; judgment, mercy, and faith*; faith, that is, fidelity, truth or faithfulness, in the discharge of any trust reposed in men. Analogous to which, it is also sometimes used for the trust itself, or the thing committed to our charge; thus (Rom. xii. 6.) *having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering*; [the phrase in our modern language is very difficult, and cannot well be understood without this observation:] *according to the proportion of faith*, that is, according to the nature and degree of the gift or the trust reposed in us, (whether it be prophecy or ministration or any other office which requires faithfulness in the performance of it,) so let every one of us discharge his respective duty. 3dly, Another and much more usual signification of the word, *faith*; is to denote the whole gospel of Christ, or the christian religion, in opposition to the ritual works of the law of Moses. Thus (Acts, vi. 7.) *the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*; that is, embraced the gospel. Again, (Rom. iii. 28.) *A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*; by *faith*, that is, by the conditions of the gospel. And, (Rom. x. 8.) *the word of faith, which we preach*; that is to say, the doctrine of the gospel. And indeed generally throughout all the Epistles, and in the book of the Acts, this is the constant signification of the word, *faith*. And the reason why the whole gospel is so often expressed by that name is very obvious; [namely] because the great motives and promises of the gospel, are the invisible things of a future state, which can be discerned by faith only.

4thly and lastly, In other places of scripture, the word, *faith*, signifies plainly and literally and in its most natural sense, a firm belief and persuasion; a firm belief, of the being, and attributes, and promises of God. Not, (as some understand it,) a confident credulity in they know not what, in whatever their teachers require them to believe; and that perhaps with so much the greater assurance, as the things are more absurd and unreasonable to be believed. Neither does *faith* signify, (as others have contended,) a groundless imaginary assurance, and confident reliance on our being unalterably, we know not why, in the favour of God. But it is a rational persuasion and firm belief, of his attributes discovered by nature, and of his promises made known in the gospel; so as thereby to govern and direct our lives. Thus the word is used in the 1st verse of this chapter, *faith is the substance* (a substantial well-grounded expectation) *of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* And, in the words of the text, *without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

To come to God, signifies, according to the nature of the Jewish language, making profession of religion; undertaking to live a holy and virtuous life, in obedience to God's commands, and in expectation of his rewards. And it answers to another phrase of the like import, walking with God; which signifies continuing and persevering in that religious practice, whereof coming to God is the beginning or entrance. Thus (Gen. v. 22.) *Enoch walked with God*; and, (vi. 9.) *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God.* Walking with God, is being perfect or stedfast in that religious course of life, whereof coming to God, is making the first profession. He that cometh to God, is as much as to say, who-soever will be a virtuous or religious man: In like manner, as, he that cometh to Christ, signifies more particularly he that will take upon him to be a Christian. *No man can come to me,* says our Saviour, [Joh. vi. 44.] (that is, he can-

not become a good Christian) *except the Father which hath sent me, draw him;—every man that hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* The phrase, *except the Father draw him,* is, in our present manner of speaking, difficult and unusual: but it is explained by what follows, *he that hath learned of the Father.* The meaning is, No man can effectually believe in Christ, except he first believes in God. Natural religion is the best preparative for the reception of the Christian. The love of truth and virtue in general, is the dispensation of the Father; and the doctrine of the gospel in particular, is the dispensation of the Son. Now as no man can receive Christ, who has not first heard, and is thus drawn by the Father: as no one can be a good Christian, who is not first resolved, to be a good man; so no one can hear the father, can come to God, unless he first have faith, and believes in him. The dispensation of the Father, that of creation or natural religion, is a necessary preparative for the dispensation of the Son, that is, for the gospel: And it must itself have preparation made for it by faith going before, as by the first foundation of all. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

The sense therefore of the text is this.

It is in vain to make profession of religion, without being first well instructed and firmly persuaded of this foundation; the being and attributes of God. There is no Christian, who is not well apprized of this; and may be apt to think perhaps, that it is needless to remind him of it. But there are few who consider these first principles of religion, so seriously and so frequently as they ought to do; and in such a manner, as to cause them to produce their proper effect, by influencing their whole lives and conversations. For knowledge is but a dormant habit, if not excited by constant meditation: and powers are of no use, if not produced into act. Right notions of the being and attributes of God, every one knows, are the foundation of all religion: But then this knowledge must not be a bare speculation; but a serious, practical, affecting impression, and

deep sense upon the mind, of a supreme being, who created the world by his power, preserves and governs it by his goodness and wisdom, and will judge is with justice, mercy, and truth : Of such a supreme being ; whose glory, no eye can behold ; whose majesty, no thought can comprehend ; whose power, no strength can resist ; from whose presence, no swiftness can flee ; from whose knowledge, no secret can be concealed ; whose justice, no art can evade ; whose goodness, every creature partakes of. This is that *faith*, without which it is impossible to please God. It is impossible to please him without it ; not that virtue and righteousness, if it were possible to find them without *faith*, could be in themselves unacceptable to God ; but that, because without such *faith* there can be no righteousness, therefore neither without it can God possibly be pleased. Righteousness is the only means, by which rational beings can obtain the favour of God ; and therefore since *faith* is necessary in order to righteousness, it is consequently necessary to the obtaining of the favour of God. He that will please God, must come to him in the ways of virtue and true holiness ; and he that cometh to God, must first believe that he is.

From what has been said upon this head, we may easily dissipate the vain fears of many pious and sincere persons, who are very apt to be suspicious of themselves that they want true *faith*, and consequently that their religion is vain. Now this fear, in such persons, evidently arises from want of having a distinct notion what *faith* is. They are possessed of the thing ; but for want of clearly understanding the notion, they are not able to judge rightly whether they have it or not. From the explication which has now been given of that matter, men may easily examine themselves, whether they have that *faith* which I have been describing, or no. And without entering into the definition at all, there is yet a plainer rule given us by our Saviour ; *by its fruits we may know it*. Wherever the fruits of righteousness and true virtue are found, there cannot be wanting the root of faith, from which those fruits proceed : For he that cometh to God, does certainly

believe that he is ; and gives the best proof in the world that he does so. On the contrary, whosoever upon examination finds not in his life the fruits of righteousness ; whatsoever his speculative understanding may be, yet in the Christian sense he may be sure he has no *faith*. For if the spring, the cause, the active principle were present ; there would not be wanting its proper effect. Such as the root is, such will be the branches. He who seriously believes that God is ; will endeavour to come unto him, in the ways of truth and righteousness.

Having thus briefly explained the former part of the words ; and shewn both what *faith* is, and how absolutely necessary ; as without which it is impossible to please God, or to come unto him ; it remains that I consider, in the latter part of the words, those two fundamental instances or primary objects of faith, laid before us by the apostle ; namely, the being of God, and his relation to us ; *that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. The first foundation of all, and the primary object of faith, is the being of God ; *he that cometh to God, must believe that he is*. Now the grounds or arguments, upon which our faith in this particular is built ; besides the evidence and authority of revelation ; are, from reason itself, and from the very nature of things, many and various : there being hardly any thing in nature, from whence the certainty of the being of God, may not justly and reasonably be deduced. Some of the arguments are abstruse, and require attention ; but, when thoroughly considered, conclude most strongly to the conviction of obstinate unbelievers. Others are plain, easy, and obvious, suited to all capacities ; always ready at hand to confirm the faith even of the meanest understandings ; and yet differing from the former, not in strength, but in being more common only. It would be tedious to repeat at length upon this head a great number of arguments among Christians to whom they have been so often urged, and are so well understood. But by a brief recapitulation, to remind ourselves frequently of things already known, for the better assisting of our meditations, cannot

but in many cases be very useful. *For me, saith St Paul, to repeat unto you the same things, is not grievous, and for you it is safe.* To this purpose, the numerous arguments, which prove (in particular) the being of God, may be naturally reduced to the two which follow.

First, That it is evident, both we ourselves, and all the other beings we know in the world, are weak and dependent creatures; which neither gave ourselves being, nor can preserve it by any power of our own: And that therefore we entirely owe our being to some superior and more powerful cause; which superior cause either must be itself the first cause, which is the notion of God; or else, by the same argument as before, must derive from him, and so lead us to the knowledge of him. If it be said, that we received our being from our forefathers by a continued natural succession, (which however would not in any step have been possible, without a perpetual providence,) yet still the argument holds no less strong concerning the first of the whole race; that he could not but be made by a superior intelligent cause. If an atheist, contrary to the truth of all history, shall contend that there may have been, without any beginning at all, an eternal succession of men; yet still it will be no less evident, that such a perpetual succession could not have been without an eternal superior cause; because in the nature of things themselves there is manifestly no necessity, that any such succession of transient beings, either temporary or perpetual, should have existed at all.

Secondly, The other argument, to which the greatest part of the proofs of the being of God may briefly be reduced, is the order and beauty of the world; that exquisite harmony of nature, by which (as St. Paul expresses it, Rom. i. 20.) *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* And this argument, as it is infinitely strong to the most accurate philosophers, so it is also sufficiently obvious even to the meanest capacities. Whose power was it (Psal. civ. 2.), that framed this beautiful and stately fabric, this immense

and spacious world? *that stretched out the North over the empty place, and hanged the earth upon nothing?* (Job, xxvi. 7.) That formed those vast and numberless orbs of heaven (Psal. xix. 1.), and disposed them into such regular and uniform motions? (Psal. cxlvii. 4.)? that appointed the sun to rule the day, and the Moon and the stars to govern the night? (Psal. civ. 19) that so adjusted their several distances, as that they should neither be scorched by heat, nor destroyed by cold? that encompassed the earth with air so wonderfully contrived, as at one and the same time to support clouds for rain, to afford winds for health and traffick, to be proper for the breath of animals by its spring, for causing sounds by its motion, for transmitting light by its transparency? that fitted the water to afford vapours for rain, speed for traffic, and fish for nourishment and delicacy? that weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; and adjusted them in their most proper places for fruitfulness and health? that diversified the climates of the earth into such an agreeable variety, that in that great difference, yet each one has its proper seasons, day and night, winter and summer? that clothed the face of the earth with plants and flowers, so exquisitely adorned with various and inimitable beauties, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them? that replenished the world with animals, so different from each other in particular, and yet all in the whole so much alike? that framed with exquisite workmanship the eye for seeing, and other parts of the body necessarily in proportion, without which no creature could have long subsisted? that, beyond all these things, endued the soul of man with far superior faculties; with understanding, judgment, reason, and will; with faculties whereby in a most exalted manner God teaches us more than the beasts of the field, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven (Job, xxxv. 11.)?

It is commonly alledged by unbelievers, that all these things are done by second causes. And suppose they were, (which however is not universally true; But suppose they were

effected by second causes,) yet how would that diminish the necessity of acknowledging the first cause? If among men, many things are performed by the use of instruments; are those things therefore ever the less justly ascribed to the hands which used the instruments? Because every wheel watch moves only naturally, according to the frame of its parts, and the strength which the spring impresses upon it; is therefore the skill of the workman the less to be acknowledged, who adjusted those very things? Or because it is natural for the wheels of a watch, or for the rooms of a house, to be of such particular shapes and dimensions, does this make it possible, that therefore they may have been formed so without any artificer? All natural, all second causes, are nothing else, but either the inanimate motions of senseless matter, or the voluntary motions of dependent creatures. And what are these, but one of them the direct operation; and the other, only the free permission, of Him who ruleth over all? Men's neglecting therefore to infer the being of God, from every thing they see or think of every day, is in reality as great a stupidity as if from the constant and regular continuance of the day-light, men should cease to observe, that there is such a thing as the sun in the heavens, from whence that light proceeds. Nor would it be more absurd to imagine, that the light would continue, though the sun which causes it, were extinguished; than that the effects of nature can regularly go on, without the being of God who causes those effects. To evade this argument there is no other possible way, but to affirm either that all things were produced by chance, or that they are all eternal necessarily of themselves. As to chance, it is evident that is nothing but a mere word, or an abstract notion in our manner of conceiving things. It has itself no real being; it is nothing, and can do nothing. Besides, in the works of God, the further men search, and the more discoveries they make, the greater exactness they constantly find; whereas in things done either by the art of man, or by what we call chance, the contrary always is

true; the more they are understood, the less accurate they appear. Beyond all credulity therefore is the credulousness of atheists, whose belief is so absurdly strong, as to believe that chance could make the world, when it cannot build a house; that chance should produce all plants, when it cannot paint one landscape; that chance should form all animals, when it cannot so much as make a lifeless watch. On the other hand therefore, if they will affirm that all things are eternal; yet still the argument holds as strong as before, that things which cannot for any time exist without a cause, can much less without a cause exist through all time. Unless they will affirm, that all things exist by an internal absolute necessity in their own nature. Which that they do not, is evident from hence; that there exists in the world an infinite diversity of things, whereas necessity is uniform and without variation.

Having thus briefly shewn that God is; it will easily follow in the next place, that he is and must be a *rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. For he that governs the motions of every even the smallest particle of lifeless matter, and by whose providence every vegetable and every the meanest animal is perpetually preserved; without whom, not a sparrow falls to the ground; and with whom, even the very hairs of our head are all numbered; shall he not much more take care of us, *O we of little faith?* Now the proper and principal care or government over rational creatures, is the rewarding or punishing them according to their respective deserts. If therefore God is, (as hath before been proved,) and is governor of the world; it follows that he must be also, (since therein principally all government consists; he must be) a *rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.

Application, of what has been said, is briefly; 1st, to sceptics; and 2dly, to believers.

1st, To such as are sceptics or unbelievers of the being of God, it is advisable in the first place, that they consider how uncomfortable their opinion is. It is plain, such is the condition of human nature in this life, that we are conti-

nually surrounded with evils which we cannot prevent, with wants which we are not able to supply, with infirmities which we cannot remove, with dangers which we can no way escape. Our enjoyments are such, as are not for one moment secure; our expectations, of such things as are not in our own power to accomplish. We are apt to grieve, for things we cannot help; and to be tormented with fears, of what we cannot prevent. And in all these cases, there is no substantial comfort, but in the belief of God; and in the singular satisfaction of having him our friend. Had the thing therefore really in itself any uncertainty, (which is by no means the case,) yet it could not but be what every wise and reasonable man must desire and wish might be true, that the world were governed by a wise and just and merciful God. So that even sceptics themselves cannot but be self-condemned, when they mock and scoff at religion; when they refuse to hear arguments for the truth of the most desirable thing in the world; and will not examine those evidences and proofs of religion, which are really much stronger than these persons can before-hand imagine. And if the proofs were much weaker than they are, yet they would deserve at least to be seriously considered; because the hazard on one side is infinitely great, if religion, which they reject, be true; whereas on the other side there is no hazard at all, if, being received as true, it could possibly prove to be a mistake.

2dly, To sincere believers, the use of what has been said, is; that being once satisfied in the *main and great* truths of religion, they suffer not themselves to be moved, and their faith in this *great* point, shaken, by nice and uncertain disputes about particular questions of less moment. For, which way soever many such controversies of an abstruse and difficult nature, be determined; yet the great foundation of religion upon which a wise man may always act steadily, is laid deep and sure in this plain proposition, that *God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

SERMON VII.

By FRANCIS ATTERBURY, D.D.

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On the Incarnation of our Lord.

MATTH. xi. 6.

Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

AND can any man then be offended in thee, blessed Jesu! who hast undertaken, and done, and suffered so much for all men! who willingly emptiedst thyself of all thy glory, leftest heaven and the bosom of thy Father, for our sakes; and when thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, didst not (as at this time) abhor the virgin's womb! Can a design of so much goodness ever miscarry by the folly of those, on whose very account it was undertaken! Can such a message of love (of a love astonishing and infinite) be rejected!—Canst thou thyself, the great messenger, be received any otherwise, than with the open arms and hearts of all thy creatures, for whose redemption thou wert thus made flesh, and dweltst among us!—Is it possible for any one of them to be any ways offended in thee!

Yet so it is, blessed Lord! that from thy first coming in the flesh to this time, there have been unreasonable men all along, that have taken offence at thee!—And there will not fail to be such within the pale of christianity itself, even till thy second coming to judge the world!—Thy doctrines have been complained of, as laying too great a restraint on human nature, as hard and unpracticable sayings!—Thy mysteries have been doubted of, disputed against, and ridiculed, by men of perverse and proud minds, who are resolved to believe nothing farther than they can thoroughly and clearly comprehend it!—Thy person itself, the circumstances and way of thy coming, have been an offence unto many!—*To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness!* (1 Cor. i. 23.) A constant

occasion of falling to all godless and sinful men, whose high minds are not brought into captivity to the obedience of faith, nor made fit for the reception of the truth, as it is in Jesus!—But blessed are all they (have thy holy lips pronounced) who in none of these ways are offended in thee!

As to the two former ways of being offended in Christ, on the account of the difficulty of practising those duties he has enjoined, and believing those articles of faith he hath proposed, I shall not at present enter into the consideration of them. The festival we are now celebrating determines me rather to point my reflections on the offence which has been taken at the person of Christ, the method and manner of his coming amongst us!—The objections of which kind, I shall briefly propose, and answer; that so having rooted and grounded ourselves in a firm belief of the doctrine, we may, with the more assurance, make those several improvements of it, which will be profitable unto godliness.

It hath formerly, by Porphyry and Celsus, and ever since by their successors, the open or hidden enemies of Christianity, been thus argued:

That the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God is unreasonable and incredible; inconsistent with the clear notions we have of the unlimited perfections of God, and the finite properties of man; between which there is so wide and eternal a difference as seems to render them incapable of being joined together in one and the same person or subject. For how can wisdom, perfection, and happiness itself, be mixed with folly, infirmity, and misery? What union can there be between what is finite, and that which is infinite?

But were it conceivable, how the divine and human nature could be united into one person; yet it is not (say they) reasonable to believe that such a method was actually taken. For surely there were other ways beside this of restoring lapsed man to the favour of God, and that happiness which he had forfeited, and of taking away the sins of the world: the unlimited mercy of the divine nature was of itself sufficient to

compass this end, and forgive this debt, without requiring any ransom; and unless a God incarnate were absolutely and indispensably requisite to free mankind from the guilt and dominion of their sins, it is no ways reasonable to think that recourse was had to so extraordinary a remedy.

Now, as to the first part of the objection, the impossibility of an union between God and man in the same person or subject, it is a bold and a presumptuous plea. For who is he, among the reasoners of this world, that is able precisely to determine, in such obscure points as these, what is possible or impossible to be accomplished by almighty wisdom and power? Are our notions of these two beings, God and man, so full every way, and distinct and clear, as to satisfy us, that such an union is in itself repugnant, and altogether impossible? Would we impartially consider what passes within our minds, when we employ them in such nice disquisitions as these, we should find, that all that passes there is darkness and confusion; and that we can discern too little of either of these natures, to be able to pronounce, with any assurance, that it is impossible for them to be joined together in one person.

We have no just idea indeed of the manner in which such an union may be effected; but so neither have we of the manner of that union which is between our souls and bodies. An union, which we can as little explain, or comprehend, as even that of the Deity with the humanity. and which yet we can no more doubt of, than we can of our own being and subsistence. Will the most keen and piercing wit among the sons of men say, that he perceives plainly, how a corporeal can be joined to an incorporeal being; and what are those common ties and ligaments that hold them; how they act upon each other, move, and are moved by turns; and what kind of contact that is, by which such motions are mutually communicated? No, these are secrets, which we can no ways, by any strength of thought, fathom; and which perhaps we should have been apt to imagine inconsistent and impossible speculations, had not experience taught us,

that things are really so, though we cannot possibly find out how they should be so.

Had the spirits of men been once unbodied, and had God revealed to them in that state of separation, that he designed them for another station in a lower world; and, in order to it, would clothe them with gross and sensible matter, and make them act continually in concert with fleshly organs, and with dependence upon them, no doubt but one of these forward reasoners would have concluded immediately, that the thing proposed was unphilosophical and absurd.—And, therefore, that, either the revelation did not really come from God, or that this could not be the sense of it.—For how could body and spirit, things so totally different, any ways meet together, and compose one entire subject? or how could they, when thus met, have any possible influence on each other?

These therefore are immodest and unjustifiable ways of reasoning, which would persuade us to reject truths, on the account of some supposed impossibilities, of which it is manifestly impossible that we should have any clear and adequate conception. And therefore, in all such cases, it becomes not us to say, what can, or cannot be done, or what the nature of things will, or will not admit of. The short and only sure point upon which controversies of this kind must turn is to see what God in his holy Word has assured us concerning them.

As to the second part of the objection, That there were other ways of bringing about the pardon of sin, and the salvation of man; far be it from us to prescribe to God, or to say,—That infinite Goodness and Wisdom itself could have found out no other expedient. But since this, and no other, was made use of by God, we must needs think it the most proper of any, and the best proportioned to those ends and purposes for which he designed it. And though it becomes us rather implicitly to adore the divine wisdom, than curiously to inquire into the reasons, and boldly to sound the depths of it; yet is there some light afforded us in scripture, whereby we may discover

a mighty fitness and congruity between the method that was used, and the end that was brought about by it.

Guiding ourselves therefore by the discoveries made to us on this head in holy writ, we may safely venture to say,—It was fit and requisite, that our Redeemer should be God, that, by the infinite dignity of his person, the value of the sacrifice which he made of himself in the flesh, might be so far enhanced, as to become a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world: That the laws which he should publish might carry in them the utmost obligation and force: That his doctrine might have the highest authority: That we, being assured of his absolute security from sin, might look up to his example, as to a perfect pattern of holiness; and in all things, without doubt or fear, implicitly follow his steps.

It was fit he should be God, that he might give an instance of infinite condescension and love towards us, and might from hence engage us to love and obey him also, without bounds: That he might be enabled in our behalf to vanquish Satan, and all the powers of hell, and erect a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men, by triumphing first over all the strength, and cunning, and malice, of our spiritual enemies.

It was highly expedient also, that he should be man, that our offences might be repaired in that nature which committed them: And as, *by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one man, many might be made righteous.* Rom. v. 19.

That he might be qualified from thence to be a *merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God* (Heb. ii. 17.), and a proper intercessor with him for man, whose infirmities he had tried, whose needs he had been sensible of; and having *himself suffered and been tempted, might be able and willing to succour those that are tempted.* Ver. 18.

Lastly, That by appearing in human form, he might make a difference between the rigorous and astonishing dispensation of the law, and that milder one of grace: Coming to us in the most familiar and winning way; instructing us in our duty like one of us; and pro-

posing to us a lively and full example of what he taught, in what he did and suffered for us.

These are some of the accounts which God has hinted to us in scripture, why his infinite wisdom was pleased to pitch upon this way, rather than any other, of reconciling man to himself. And yet, after all the accounts we can give ourselves of it, we cannot but confess it to be an abyss of mercy, which neither we nor angels are able to pry into; and which God alone, who contrived it, can fully explain and comprehend.

Let us forbear therefore to wade farther into the depth of this great mystery of God manifest in the flesh; and let us satisfy ourselves with believing it, as God has revealed it, without indulging our curiosity in an unprofitable search after the reasons which induced God to order the stupendous work of our redemption in so inconceivable a manner: And let us proceed to draw from thence those plain practical improvements, which may render it profitable unto godliness, and with which it will readily furnish us.

And the first and most natural use we are to make of it is, to raise to ourselves from thence matter of thankfulness and spiritual joy. *Behold, I bring you, said the angel to the shepherds, good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Luke, ii. 10, 11. And these indeed are the best tidings that ever God sent, or the world received; tidings of no less than freedom from the guilt and punishment of sin; of a way opened to repentance, and the favour of God; to peace of conscience in this world, and everlasting happiness in the next.

Before the coming of Christ, all the account we could have of these things from the light of nature, went no farther than this,—That the breach of any of God's laws brought guilt along with it; and that guilt made us liable to punishment.—Whether God, upon any considerations, would ever remit this punishment, was more than mere reason could possibly tell us. For the justice of God certainly required, that sin

should be followed with punishment: Nor was this inconsistent with the goodness of God, which was otherwise sufficiently manifested to us. Under these kind of dark and uncomfortable reasonings we left, till Christ *the sun of righteousness* arose with healing in his wings (Mat. iv. 2,) and published the gospel of repentance, and remission of sins. All thanks and praise therefore be given to him, that our tongues can possibly express, or our hearts conceive! Abraham, at a mighty distance, and upon a very dim and imperfect view of it, *rejoiced to see this day* (John, viii. 56.): The angels, who themselves had no interest in this deliverance, yet were highly pleased with the prospect of those blessings it derived on their fellow-creature man; and therefore sung that hymn on this occasion, which the Evangelist has recorded—*Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good-will towards men.* Luke, ii. 14. And shall not we, for whose sake this peace was sent on earth, and to whom all this good-will was meant, shall not we also give glory to God on high, and rejoice before him with reverence? Surely this is news, at which (as Isaiah prophesies of the miraculous effects that should take place in the kingdom of the Messiah) *the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.* Isa. xxxv. 6.

A second improvement that should be made of this doctrine is, to raise our love to God from hence, to all the degrees of which it is capable.

For love surely deserves returns of love; and the highest instances of love, the highest returns of it. Now in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that he might live through him, Herein is love (as St. John continues his argument), *not that we loved God* (that is, loved God first, and by that means drew down his love upon us), *but that he loved us* (antecedently, freely), *and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John, iv. 9, 10.)

Had God sent the meanest attendant in the court of heaven, to publish abroad the good tidings of his free and voluntary pardon of sin, should we not

have entertained it as a message of unspeakable love! How much more, when he sends his Son, his only begotten Son, on this errand! When he sends him to partake of our nature, and of all the infirmities, miseries, shame, and pain that attend it; and at last to be made a sacrifice for our sins, by the very hands of those men for whose sake he left heaven! This raises the motive so high, that our lips are faint when we speak of it; and our heart melts away almost under the sense of that excessive burthen of love which lies upon us. •

But how strangely is the force of this motive weakened by those who make Christ a mere man, not the eternal Son of God, sent out to us from the bosom of his Father! For at this rate the love of God toward us abates very much; and then, I am afraid, ours toward him will proportionably abate with it. For the higher apprehensions we have of God's antecedent love to man, the stronger will our endeavours still be to raise our affections up to a pitch some way suitable to these apprehensions.

So that, whether these men have, by this expedient, lessened the difficulties of their faith, or not (which is matter of dispute), sure we are, that they have evidently lessened the argument for their love by it.

Another plain use we are to make of this doctrine is, to give us an high sense of the dignity of our nature, and an hearty displeasure at those sins which debase and dishonour it.

Behold now, as the Apostle to the Hebrews argues, is that prophecy of the Psalmist concerning man fulfilled in your ears—*Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thine hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet* (Heb. ii. 7.); that is, The human nature, by its assumption to the divine, is now advanced far above principalities, powers, and every created being: Now it is, in the person of Christ, become an object of adoration, even to spirits of the first rank and order. For, as the same Apostle interprets another passage of the Psalmist, *When God brought his first begotten Son into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.* Heb. i. 6.

Should not such a reflection as this make us resolve to do nothing beneath that nature which God has so highly honoured? Not to pollute it with vile affections and lusts; Not to set it upon mean and unworthy pursuits, and on minding earthly things; but to have our conversation in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Phil. iii. 19, 20, 21.

A sense of birth and noble blood will often keep men from doing things beneath themselves, when no other motive can restrain them: And shall it not be sufficient to preserve us from every evil and desiling work, to consider our near alliance with God himself, by the intervention of the Man Christ Jesus? Surely such a consideration should engage us, after the most powerful manner, to purify our natures, even as his is pure; and to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. 2 Cor vii. 1.

And as God's assuming our nature should make us reflect often on the dignity and worth of it, and resolve not to deile that with base and brutish enjoyments which Christ has thus ennobled and sanctified; so, on the other hand,

The condescension also of the Son of God, in this mysterious work of our redemption, should infuse into us a spirit of universal humility. Since He who has the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person (Heb. i. 3.), emptied himself willingly of all that glory, to become a vile and miserable creature for the salvation of men, what a deep lowliness of mind ought we (in imitation of him) to carry about us, through the several stages of life, and the different administrations of Providence? How willing should it make us to undertake any work, to be seen in any office, though never so mean and low, that tends any way to the good and welfare of mankind? It is the great Apostle's argument, *Let nothing be done (says he) through strife, or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of*

God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

A fifth thing I would recommend to you, from considering the incarnation of Christ, is, that we would take care to trace all the steps of that example which he set us in the flesh; and which that he might set us, was one great end of his taking our nature upon him. And, oh! let not this end be frustrated, by our neglecting to look up to that admirable pattern of all virtue and holiness in the life of the immaculate Jesus, which the four gospels have afforded us! A life, as useful to be handed down to us in all its circumstances, as his very precepts themselves. For in that he exemplified his precepts, and gave an instance of the practicableness, the beauty, and the power of them. Such an instance, as charms the eyes, and engages the hearts of all that behold it; and will, if well attended to, have the same influence upon us, that the enjoying the immediate view of God, face to face, once had upon Moses; it will make us shine with part of that lustre we are looking upon, and transform us into some kind of resemblance with it. *We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord* (2 Cor. iii. 18.); that is, viewing carefully the image of our Lord's life, as it is drawn to us in the glass of the Evangelists, and studying to express it in ourselves, *we shall be changed* (as it follows) *into the same image from glory to glory; from one degree of virtue and perfection to another, till at last we arrive at the very measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* Ephes. iv. 13.

I shall mention but one improvement more of the doctrine of the day, and then conclude.—And that is, that we should take occasion from hence, highly to esteem and reverence the evangelical dispensation: To value and prize that everlasting gospel, which Christ sealed to us with his blood; above all other books, religions, and philosophies; above all other methods of living and dying that have been ever taught or practised in the world.

Were there nothing contained in it, but that *one faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tim. i. 15); even that should recommend it more to us, and make us take greater delight in perusing it, than turning over all the volumes of wit and reason, all the discourses of moral virtue, all the treatises of arts and sciences, which the learned part of mankind among the Gentiles have afforded us: We should count them all but dross and dung, in comparison of the *excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.* Phil. iii. 8.

But the best expression of our reverence towards this gospel is, to comply with the terms of it. Let us remember that the last scope of the whole mystery of godliness is, to oblige mankind to be good and virtuous; and to lead lives answerable to such bright discoveries and motives as revelation has proposed to us. And therefore let me exhort and beseech every one of you this day, as ye would not (as far as in you lies) frustrate the design of our Saviour's birth; as ye would not baffle the truth of those prophecies concerning the innocence and purity of the lives of men under the reign of the Messiah; and, as ye would not hereafter wish, that your Saviour had never been born, nor you yourselves neither; to be careful for your parts to answer the great end of his incarnation, and to live as becomes a people, that have been thus redeemed of the Lord.

For how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?

SERMON VIII.

The difficult Passages of Scripture are vindicated from such Objections as are usually made to them; and proper Directions given how we are to use them.

2 PET. iii. 16.

In which are some things hard to be understood: Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

ST. PETER, in this chapter, employs his pen in fortifying the minds of those

Christians, to whom he writes, against that scorn and mockery they met with from some prophane men; who disputed the certainty of this world's dissolution, and of Christ's coming to judgment; and derided the eager expectations of the first believers concerning it. *Where (said they) is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Ver. 4. Against the attempts of these scoffers, the Apostle arms them, throughout this whole chapter; assures them of the reality of their hopes, and of the truth of the divine promises; and exhorts them to wait, with patience and humility, for their accomplishment. *The Lord (saith he), is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness), but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Ver. 9.

Where he intimates the true reason of Christ's delaying his coming to be, that he may give room and space to all men every where to repent, and embrace his gospel. *Wherefore, beloved, says he (a little afterwards), account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.* Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wis'dom given unto him, hath written unto you: *As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.* Ver. 14, &c.

He seems purposely to have made mention of St. Paul in this place, not only because he concurred with him in his testimony concerning the end and design of God's long sufferance, but because his writings also had been objected against, by those very scoffers, as obscure and unintelligible. And therefore he took an occasion of mentioning our passage out of them, that he might have an opportunity of vindicating the whole from these men's scornful exceptions. *Account, says he, that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.* The place of St. Paul referred to, seems to be that in the epis-

tle to the Romans (chap. ii. 4.), *Deepinseth thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* From which parallel text thus produced from St. Paul, he takes occasion to speak of all his writings, and of the imputation which in general lay upon them. *As also in all his epistles (continues he), speaking in them of these things; in which, (i. e.) in which epistles [I explain it so, notwithstanding a criticism taken from the Greek, which would make the words which belong to the things spoken of in the epistles, and not to the epistles themselves, which criticism I shall not now trouble you with], I say therefore in which epistles, are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable (that are unlearned, i. e. unskilled and unversed in divine things, and unstable, i. e. of light, desultory, unbalanced minds) wrest, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*

Having thus cleared the connexion of the text, I shall discourse on it after the following manner:

- I. By enlarging a little on the proposition itself, which it contains, That there are in St. Paul's writings, and in the other scriptures also, things hard to be understood.
- II. By giving some account how, and for what reason it has come to pass, that the scriptures are, and must be, in some measure obscure: how necessary and unavoidable it was, that there should be some passages in them dark and difficult even to those who lived at the time when they were written, and yet more so to us, who live at this distance from the age of the apostles.
- III. By shewing you that this carries no reflection at all in it upon the divine goodness or wisdom. And then, in the
- IV. And last place, by raising some observations from what has been said, and preventing the ill uses that may be made of it.

1. This proposition is evidently laid down in the text, That there are in St. Paul's writings things hard to be understood: And it is plainly intimated, that

there are such things in the other parts of holy writ also: inasmuch as they who wrest these difficult passages of St. Paul, are said to wrest the other scriptures al

It is indeed an undoubted truth, and what no good Christian is, I think, in the least concerned to deny, that the books, both of the Old and New Testament, are not every where equally clear and intelligible. They have, like other books, a mixture of that which is easy, with that which is hard to be understood; a great deal that is plain and obvious, and somewhat also that is obscure and difficult. Notwithstanding they were designed to contain a revelation of God's will to men, yet was not that revelation designed to partake every where alike of the nature of its great Author and Revealer, who is (in the phrase of St. John) *Light, and in whom there is no darkness at all.* 1 John, i. 5.

Sometimes the things spoken of are so mysterious and sublime, that our limited and weak apprehensions can hardly reach them. Sometimes the manner of speaking, even concerning common things, is dark and dubious. The Apocalypse is received into the canon, together with the other parts of scripture; the sense of it has been much sought and searched after, by pious and inquisitive men, in all ages of the church: And yet we have reason to believe, that it has never yet been thoroughly understood by any man.

The beginning of St. John's gospel is so far intelligible, as that it plainly enough establishes the divinity of our Lord, and his co-eternity with God the Father: but yet nobody, I think, will say, that the sense of every term in that chapter is so clear and easy, as that no Christian, of whatever rank or degree, can, upon perusing, and attentively considering the whole, miss the meaning of it.

Even the discourses of our blessed Lord are somewhat dark and intricate in some parts of them. That with Nicodemus about regeneration (John, iii.), and that with the men of Capernaum, about eating his body and blood (John, vi.), have in them what will command and exercise our utmost attention. And his account of the destruction of Jeru-

salem, in St. Matthew (Matth. xxiv.), is so interwoven with that of the day of judgment, that it is very difficult to distinguish exactly, what expressions belong to the one, and what to the other.

And then, as to St. Paul in particular, his doctrines of justification by faith, and not by works; of election and reprobation (Gal. ii. 16); his description of the struggle between sin and the law, in the natural man, as yet unassisted by grace; and his account of the spiritual body with which we are to rise at the last day. (Rom. vii. 1 Cor. xv.), are sufficient instances of the truth of St. Peter's assertion, that in him particularly are some things hard to be understood.

This truth therefore being supposed, I proceed now, in the

II^d place, to give some account; how these obscure passages came to have a place in scripture: how it could not otherwise be but that the holy writings should, in some parts of them, be dark and difficult, even to those who lived at the time when they were written, and yet more so to us, who live at this distance from the age of the apostles.

And the plain account of this matter is, that, though the scripture was written by men, under the immediate inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, yet were those men, at the time of this inspiration, left to the free use of their own natural faculties and power; and to express themselves every one after their particular fashion and manner. The Holy Ghost, though it presided over the minds and pens of the apostles, so far as to preserve them from error, yet doth not seem to have dictated to them what they were to say, word by word, but in that to have left them, in good measure, if not altogether, to themselves. Which appears plainly from hence, in that we find the several writers of the New Testament always in their several proper and peculiar characters; and as different in their styles almost, as one human author is from another.

For what is left to men to express, placed only under an over-ruling power, which necessitates them to speak nothing but truth, must needs be expressed, though always truly, yet after the unequal, imperfect manner of men,

sometimes more darkly, and sometimes more clearly. I say therefore, that the apostles and evangelists, making use of their natural faculties and ways of speech, in committing to writing the truths delivered to them, it could not be expected that they should speak always with the same degree of perspicuity, because no other writer does so.

Further, the nature of some things they delivered was such, so high and heavenly, so obscure and altogether unknown to men, that the language of men could not but fail under them. When they were to express them, they were of necessity sometimes to fall short, in what they said, of what they imagined and conceived; and, for want of fit and adequate terms, to clothe their thoughts in unequal and improper ones. Particular as to St. Paul, who had been in the third heaven and there heard things unutterable; was it to be expected, that, when he came down from thence, he should have spoke of those mysteries after a clear and satisfactory manner? No, those to whom he spake must have been in the third heaven too, thoroughly to have understood his meaning.

It is no wonder, therefore, that there should be passages in scripture of a doubtful and uncertain meaning, even to those who lived at the time when that scripture was penned. It is yet less a wonder, that there should be many more such, with regard to us, who live at this distance from the age of the apostles.

For consider we with ourselves, what manner of men the apostles were in their birth and education; what country they lived in; what language they wrote in; and we shall find it rather wonderful, that there are so few, than that there are so many things, that we are at a loss to understand. They were men all (except St. Paul) meanly born and bred, and instructed utterly in all the arts of speaking and writing. All the languages they were masters of, was purely what was necessary to express themselves upon the common affairs of life, and in matters of intercourse with men of their own rank and profession. When they came therefore to talk of the great doctrines of the cross, to preach up the astonishing truths of the gospel, they

brought to be sure their old idiotisms and plainness of speech along with them. And is it strange then, that the deep things of God should not always be expressed by them in words of the greatest propriety and clearness?

The Eastern manner of thinking and speaking, at that time especially when the scripture was written, was widely different from ours, who live in this age, and this quarter of the world. The language of the East speaks of nothing simply, but in the boldest and most lofty figures, and in the longest and most strained allegories. Its transitions from one thing to another, are irregular and sudden, without the least notice given. Its manner of expressing things is wonderfully short and comprehensive, so as to leave much more to be understood than is plainly and directly spoken. And this also cannot but contribute to make the holy writings seem, in some parts of them obscure to such as are used to throw their thoughts and their words into a quite different mould.

Beyond all this, we, at this distance, cannot be exactly acquainted with the occasions upon which some parts of scripture were written; which nevertheless are the true and proper keys that open the meaning of them. We see not the frequent allusions to customs then known and in use. We are in the dark to many of the objections made to the apostles doctrine, which are tacitly obviated and answered by them in their epistles, without being mentioned. Under these, and many other disadvantages, the holy scriptures must needs lie, with regard to the obviousness of their sense and meaning, to us, at this distance: and it can be no blemish to them therefore, if that meaning be not always obvious.

I might, with truth, add one thing more upon this head, that, where the interpretation of scripture has any difficulty, that difficulty is often, in good measure, owing to the preposterous endeavours used, by some men, to explain and clear it. The multiplicity of comments written upon scripture, and the variety of all the possible senses of any text, started by those writers, have been so far from reaching the end aimed at, the dissipating all doubts and difficulties,

that they have cast a mist over many places, which of themselves were plain and clear; and have rendered some, ~~that were~~ really a little obscure, yet more unintelligible.

Numberless volumes have been written on scripture, in every age almost since it was published; and still the later writers have generally striven to distinguish themselves from the elder, by some new guess, by saying somewhat that hath not been said before. And thus the mind of an honest enquirer is perplexed and confounded, and, in the midst of a thousand false meanings, easily loses sight of the true one.

But still it will be said, that these are only rational accounts how scripture comes in some places to be obscure, not at all justifications of its being so. God, who inspired the apostles to write the holy scripture, might, if he had pleased, have suggested to them the very words also in which it was to be written; and, by that means, have made it all clear and easy, and took away all occasion of doubts and disputes concerning it. And since he could have done so, why was it not done, if so be the scripture were designed for a rule of faith and manners? For can a rule be too certain? Can a man know too plainly what he is to do, and what he is to believe?

In answer to this, therefore, I shall shew, as I proposed, in the

1st place, That it carries no reflection upon the divine goodness or wisdom, that the scripture is not in every part as plain and clear, as it was possible to have been made.

For (1st) the goodness of God is by no means obliged to do every thing for us that is possible to be done, but only that which is fitting and sufficient, in order to the end it designs. Now the end proposed by God, in causing the scripture to be written, is, to afford us a complete rule and measure of whatever is to be believed or done by us. If therefore, in all points of faith and practice, scripture is sufficiently plain and clear, it is as plain and clear as it need to be; and it can be no reflection on the divine goodness, not to have made it plainer.

But now, that whatever is requisite to

be believed or done by us, is sufficiently evident in scripture, will appear from these two considerations:

1. The darkness of scripture in some particular places does not hinder its being generally plain and clear. Its having some things in it hard to be understood, implies, that it has but some, and that most things in it are easy to be understood, and lie open and level to the meanest understandings. The truth is, whatever difficulties there are in scripture, they are few and little in comparison of what is plain and intelligible there. Take it altogether, and it well deserves the character holy David bestows on it; that it is a *lantern unto his feet, and a light unto his paths*, Psalm cxix. 105.; that *the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple*, ver. 130; that *the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes*, Psalm xix. 8. And if in general, and for the most part, scripture be perspicuous and clear, we have reason to think there is enough of it clear to instruct us in the whole of our duty; and make us sufficiently wise unto salvation; especially since, in the

2^d place, Nothing there that is *hard to be understood*, is necessary to be understood by us; and therefore, whatever truth is contained in any obscure place of scripture, we may satisfy ourselves, that the knowledge or practice of it shall never be required at our hands upon the account of its being contained there.

I say, upon the account of its being contained there; for a necessary doctrine that is delivered obscurely in one place may yet be revealed clearly in another and wherever it is clearly revealed we are obliged to take notice of it. But whatever doctrine is contained in one or more obscure texts of scripture, and no where else clearly expressed, is not necessary to be embraced and believed by us: nor shall we be condemned for not receiving it.

The goodness of God is sufficiently justified, in proposing the scripture as a rule of faith to us; for though it be not equally perspicuous and clear throughout, yet it is in the main, and for the most part so; and wherever it is hard to be understood, it is on that very ac-

count not necessary to be understood. But,

Secondly, Neither is there any reflection by this means cast on the wisdom of God. For though it may be said, if these hard places are not capable of being understood, why were they written? Why were they made parts of the revelation of God's will to men, if we are still as much in the dark to them as if they had never been revealed? Yet to this it may, in the

1. First place, be answered, that there is no part of scripture so obscure as to be utterly unintelligible. St. Peter says only, there are *some things hard*, but he says not, that there are any impossible to be understood. It is difficult indeed in some places to reach the sense of the inspired writers: but still it is not so difficult but that it may be done, if with care and attention we study the holy scripture; if we free ourselves from prepossessions and prejudices; if we take in all proper helps, and make use of all proper means; and, above all, if we ardently beg of God the assistance of his good Spirit, to teach and enlighten us, and lead us into all truth: I say, there is no difficulty so great in scripture, but that, by the supernatural illuminations of God's Spirit, concurring with our natural endeavours, it is possible to be mastered; and therefore God did not inspire the holy writers to write any thing altogether in vain and to no purpose; for nothing written by them is perfectly incapable of being understood; only some things lie readier to our sight, upon the surface as it were of the text, and others lie deeper, and we are forced therefore, in the words of Solomon, *to dig for them as for hid treasures*. Prov. ii. 4. But,

Secondly, The wisdom of God is further justified in leaving these hard passages, inasmuch as there are several wise ends which it serves by it, and several weighty reasons which it has for so doing.

He left them on purpose to humble the presumption and pride of man, to confound the wisdom of the wise of this world, 1 Cor. i. 19. and to give us an instance of the mighty power of God, in making those plain men, the apostles, utter such great and sublime truths, as

those of the most improved understandings among the heathens, by the mere light of nature, never did nor could do.

He left them on purpose to excite an awful reverence of mind inwards holy truths; which, had they been all easy of access, would, in a little time, have grown familiar, and cheap to us also.

To secure the majesty of religion therefore, he wrapped up some of the great mysteries of it in obscurity; *He made* (as the Psalmist speaks) *darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him with dark water, and thick clouds to cover him*. Psalm xviii. 11.

Further, He left them also to exercise our industry and to engage our attention. He designed the holy book to be such as that we might make it always our companion and our study; that our *delight* might continually be (as David's was) *in the law of the Lord, and in that we might meditate day and night*. Psalm i. 2. In order to which it was requisite that the sense of every thing, every where, should not be too plain and obvious: for how then could we have found always fresh matter for our thoughts and inquiries? No, the treasure of divine knowledge was necessarily so to be hid, in these sacred volumes, as not soon to be exhausted, so as continually to provoke our searches, and to feed our mind with ever fresh discoveries; so as that, how long soever we meditate upon it, we may have still room left for further meditations. Were all plain, were all open there, the mind would quickly droop, and the attention languish, upon the repeated views of that which it was so well acquainted with, and knew so thoroughly.

Again, God mixed together obscure with plain things, deep with common truths in scripture, that what was addressed to all might be adapted to every one's capacity. The babes in Christ, as well as grown saints, the weak promiscuously, and the strong, were to read the holy scriptures; and therefore fit it was that there should be food in it proportioned to both, milk for the one, and strong meat for the other.

Yet further; These dark doctrines and puzzling passages were inserted to be the test of ingenuous, of sincere, and

well-disposed minds; to see whether, when we were once satisfied that a book came from God, we would acquiesce in everything contained in it, and submit ourselves (without disputes or cavils) as we do to those parts of it which shocked, as to those which enlightened our minds; or whether we would not, as many have done, lay hold of every obscure passage to the prejudice of scripture, though we had otherwise never so many arguments for the divine original of it, and reject the authority of all that which is plain and clear there, for the sake of something which we do not comprehend.

Finally, God left these obscurities in holy writ, on purpose to give us a taste and glimpse as it were of those great and glorious truths, which shall hereafter fully be discovered to us in another world, but which now are, in some measure, *hidden from our eyes*, on purpose to make us earnestly aspire after, and long for, that blessed state and time, when all doubts shall be cleared, and the veil taken off from all mysteries: when *the book* that is now in some measure *shut*, shall be *opened*, and every one of the seven seals thereof loosed. Rev. v. 5. *When that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away.* 1 Cor. xiii. 10. When we shall exchange faith for sight, hope for enjoyment, reasoning for intuition; and shall not, as we do now, *see through a glass darkly*, but *know*, even as we are *known*. Ver. 12.

To that blessed state, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, &c.

SERMON IX.

The same Subject continued.

2 PET. iii. 16.

In which are some things hard to be understood: Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

In my former discourse I shewed you that these words of St. Peter relate directly to the writings of St. Paul, in which he owns there are *some things hard to be understood*, and that they who are *unlearned and unstable wrested them, as they did the other scriptures, to their own destruction*. Whereby he intimates, that there are also in the other

parts of scripture, as well as in the writings of St. Paul, obscure passages, liable to be misunderstood, wrested and perverted by unlearned and unstable readers.

I have therefore taken an occasion from hence to discourse to you at large concerning the difficult parts of holy writ, so as to take in the general argument; and yet to keep my eye more particularly all along upon the books of the New Testament, to which St. Peter's words chiefly refer.

I proposed to treat of this subject under the four following heads:

I. By enlarging a little on the proposition allowed and laid down in the text, That there are in St. Paul's writings, and in the other scriptures also, *things hard to be understood*.

II. By giving some account how, and for what reason, it hath come to pass, that the scriptures are and must be in some measure obscure; how necessary and unavoidable it was, that there should be some passages in them dark and difficult, even to those who lived at the time when they were written, and yet more so to us, who live at this distance from the age of the apostles.

III. By shewing you, that this carries in it no reflection, either upon the goodness or wisdom of God: Not on his goodness; because though he has left some things in holy writ *hard to be understood*, yet he hath left enough there easy and plain, enough to inform us clearly of the whole compass of what we are bound to believe and to practise: Not on his wisdom; because these dark parts of holy writ have their uses as well as the clear ones; there being many wise ends and weighty reasons for inserting them; several of which I reckoned up to you in my last discourse.

IV. And lastly, I was to raise some observations from what hath been said; to prevent the wrong uses that might, and to point out the true and only use that ought to be made of it.

The two first of these heads have been fully spoken to; the third has been entered upon, and in some measure cleared; and what remains behind of it will fall into the fourth and last general

head, the enlarging on which shall be the business of this present discourse.

And the first thing I shall observe, from what has been said on this subject, shall be, the folly and unreasonableness of those men who endeavour, from the obscurity of some parts of scripture, entirely to destroy the authority of it.

For thus they argue: The bible, say they, is a book ordered by God to be written for the information of mankind in what they are to believe and to do. And can we think, that such a book, from such an author, should have any defects in it? Can it be imagined, that God would speak to man, and yet not speak so as in every case to be understood by him? Is he either not able or not willing to express himself clearly? If neither of these can be supposed without blasphemy, how comes it to pass that this volume is so full of difficulties and mysteries? that this revelation of his will wants a yet further revelation, to give us a plain account of its meaning?

Thus do the *ungodly reason with themselves, but not aright* (Wisd. ii. 1), as will appear from these following considerations:

It is a strange sort of argument, surely, that a book, which comes from God, must have nothing in it *obscure, and hard to be understood*. On the contrary, I think it were much to be suspected, that such a book as this was not of divine authority, if it should be found to lie ready and open to the most ordinary apprehensions in every part and passage of it. It is given to us, on purpose to open to us some discoveries concerning the divine nature, its essence and ineffable perfections; to inform us of mysterious truths, the secrets of heaven hid from natural reason, and from former ages. And can a book, do we think, that speaks of these deep things of God, with which the natural man is utterly unacquainted, speak so as not to give us the least trouble in understanding it? Can that, like which *our eyes never saw, nor our ears heard, nor hath it entered into the heart* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) to conceive any thing before, be told us in words as easy to be apprehended, as those by which we express the most common things that we every

day converse with? It is not so, when we first set ourselves to learn any human art or science: the terms, the principles, the propositions of it, are at first sight strange and uncouth, and make no bright impression upon the mind. They amaze, they puzzle; but they do not enlighten us; till by repeated views we have made them familiar and easy to us. And why then should we expect, that divine mysteries, and the things of another world, should more easily be taught and learnt, than human arts and sciences? The obscurity of the subject, whatever it be, must needs cause a proportionable obscurity in the expression of it; and no wonder then, if scripture be dark in some places, where it speaks of things so remote from human knowledge and apprehension.

Dark it must needs be, unless God, who miraculously enlightened the minds of the prophets and apostles, when they were to write it, should miraculously also open the understanding of every one that comes to read it. So that the difficulties occurring in some passages of a divine revelation, are so far from being an argument against its coming from God, that, on the contrary, it were not reasonable to think it to be a divine revelation, if there were nothing abstruse and difficult in it.

Should it be further objected, that the design of scripture is, to reveal God's nature and will to mankind, to be a sure guide, and an easy rule of our belief and practice; and it ought therefore, in order to the attainment of this end, to be in every respect plain and clear: for to no purpose would it be given us by God, as a guide and a rule, if it be obscurely and doubtfully expressed.

To this the answer is ready; that the scripture, being intended by God as a rule of faith and manners, must needs be, and certainly is, so far clear, as to reach the end it is intended for; so far, as to enlighten our minds in all necessary saving truths, and to afford us, in plain intelligible terms, all that knowledge that is requisite to carry us to heaven. And thus far we affirm the scripture to be clear and easy. But it follows, that it ought, on this account,

to be plain and clear, in every part and passage of it. If there be enough in it easy to be apprehended, it sufficiently answers the end for which it was designed, though there be some things in it which are not so. And therefore the objection fails in this, that it supposes scripture to be written perfectly for this end, and for no other, the affording us an easy familiar rule of faith and manners. This indeed was the chief, but it was not the only, end proposed in writing it.

Besides this it was intended (as you have heard) so to be written, as to humble the pride of men, and confound the wisdom of the wise: so as to try our probity, and to exercise our strictest attention, and to employ our industry, so as to create a reverence and awe in us of the Divine Revealer; and to give us an instance of the mighty power of God, in making those plain men, the apostles, utter such great and sublime truths, as those of the most improved understandings among the Heathen, by the mere light of nature, never did, or could do: in a word, so as to give us a light taste and glimpse only of those truths that were fully to be revealed to us in another world; and, by that means, to make us the more earnestly reach out our thoughts to, aspire after, and long for, the future and full enjoyment of them. And in order to attain these ends, it was fit and requisite that some parts of it should be involved in obscurity; as I discoursed to you the last opportunity. And therefore it must not be argued, that the written word of God, being designed for a rule of faith and action, must be perspicuous throughout: because there were other ends besides this, to which some parts of it were designed; and to the attaining which, the dark and difficult places in holy writ contribute as much, as the plain and most intelligible passages do, towards building us up in those doctrines that are necessary to salvation.

But then it is further objected, that this way of accounting for the obscurity of holy writ in some things, supposeth it to be evident in all things necessary to salvation; a supposition which will not easily be granted by

those we have to deal with. For, say they, are not the doctrines of the divinity of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and those of the same rank with these, necessary to salvation? And yet they are not plainly and clearly contained in scripture: for then reasonable men, upon reading scripture, could not have doubted, whether they were contained there or not; much less in good earnest believed that they were not contained there.

Now the true account of this matter is this:

First. It is not pretended, that these doctrines are plainly contained in every text of scripture, which speaks of them; but only that, in some one text or more, they are proposed to us convincingly and clearly; and if a truth be once delivered so clearly as to leave no doubt, it is the same thing to us, who acknowledge the divine authority of all parts of scripture, as if it were many times there repeated. For example, were there no other text for the proof of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in the sense in which the church of God hath always professed to believe it, but that only where our Saviour commands his disciples to *baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost* (Matth. xxviii. 19.); or that where St. John speaks of the *three witnesses in heaven* (1 John, v. 7.); either of these texts would be sufficient to make that doctrine an evident part of scripture, though in all the other passages usually produced for it, it should be allowed to be expressed obscurely.

Again, Neither is it pretended that these doctrines are any where, throughout the whole Bible, expressed with the utmost degree of evidence and clearness, which words are anyways possibly capable of; but only that they are so expressed, that an honest impartial mind cannot well miss the sense of them. It might have been said indeed, in so many words, that Christ and the Holy Spirit were, from all eternity, distinct from the Father, and, together with him, one God blessed for ever; and equally, the objects of our religious worship and service. But though this be not said there in so many terms, it is said however in such, as an unbiased

well-meaning man cannot mistake; and he that is not so, though it should have been said in these very terms, would perhaps have found a way to have mistaken, or rather wilfully to have perverted, the sense of them.

The truth is, God never designed to give us an account of the mysteries of christianity, in expressions every way so bright and clear, as should prevent all possible wrestlings and misconstructions. For this had been to do too great force to our assent, which ought to be free and voluntary. This had been to rob us of the rewards due to believing, and to take away the proper test and trial of sincere and ingenuous minds.

Besides, had all points of doctrine been delivered with such a degree of exactness, been so minutely explained, so strictly and cautiously guarded on all sides, as to shut out the possibility of any mistaken meaning, the Bible had been too voluminous and too subtle a book for common use. And though to some few distinguishing heads, it might have given better satisfaction, yet to the most, that is, to the unlettered part of mankind, it would have been ten times more obscure and unintelligible, than even now it is represented to be. So that upon the whole it was extremely fit and proper that these doctrines should be delivered with that degree of clearness as to be easily understood; not so as to be perfectly incapable of being misunderstood. It was requisite that they should be asserted shortly and plainly, not that they should be fenced about with all those nice distinctions which could anyway guard them from the attempts of the most captious and unreasonable.

And with this degree of clearness we affirm that all necessary truths are delivered in scripture, i. e. with such a degree of clearness as is necessary. Nor does it weaken the strength of this assertion to say, that the sense of those passages in scripture, which we think plain to this purpose, is disputed by some, and absolutely denied by others; and therefore is not so plain as we imagine. For at this rate there would perhaps be never a plain text left in the whole book of God. "Since what text almost is there, that has not been the

subject of different interpretations and opinions?

There is scarce any thing so absurd, says an ancient, in nature or in man, but some philosopher or other will find it. And there is scarce any thing so extravagant in divinity (may we say), but that some obstinate opinionative man or other has maintained it, and made a wretched shift to countenance his opinion by the authority of scripture, miserably wrested and perverted to his purpose. But what then? This makes no more against the perspicuity of the holy writings in all necessary doctrines, than the wild opinion of that old philosopher who affirmed snow to be black, disproves the clearness and certainty of those informations which proceed from the senses.

Let not a man therefore say, that the scripture is not plain in those things in which we pretend it is, because in those very things the church of God hath understood it one way, and Arius, Socinus, or some such broacher of heresy, another. For this proves nothing, but that there have been men hardy enough to deny somewhat, which all the world before them allowed: But it is by no means an argument of the obscurity of scripture expression, unless we could know certainly, that these men were honest and upright in their searches, acted with no hy-designs, had no vain end which they proposed to themselves, of heading a party, or baffling received opinions; came to search these books without bias, prejudice, or any pre-engagements to some opinions of their own, which they were willing and resolved to find there. Without all this, and a great deal more, be proved (which indeed is not capable of proof), the scriptures may be clear, though men of clear reason in other things do not or will not understand them.

Well then, the obscurity of scripture carries no objection at all in it, either against the goodness or wisdom of God: for in all things necessary to be understood, it is obvious and plain; and in what is unnecessary to be understood there are many good and wise reasons why it should not be plain. In the mean time, let those who reject scripture be pleased to find us out a system of religion delivered by God without any

of these difficulties in it. We desire no more of them, but to leave us in possession of our bibles, till they can shew us a clearer revelation, and more worthy of the divine Revealer.

If to this they shall say (as many in our own times do say), What need of any revelation at all? Reason is clear, and by that we may guide ourselves; God has implanted a light in every one sufficient to shew him the way to heaven:—We must ask them, whether natural religion speaks so plainly in any one point of religion; but that some perverse man or other has contradicted it? And then, by their own rule concerning the obscurity of scripture, that point is not plain from reason, because rational thinking men have denied its plainness. So that a man who, on account of the obscurity of holy writ, shall pretend to reject the Christian religion, and turn deist, must, upon the same account, reject deism too, and turn atheist. For there are a great many things in the notion of a God, and of that worship which natural religion directs us to pay him, that he can never satisfy himself about, nor thoroughly understand. Nay, he must not stay at atheism neither, for the very same reason: since no system of that kind can be contrived, which is not in many parts of it obscure and unintelligible. A great instance of which we have in the writings of that modern atheist Spinoza. In a word he must be nothing, believe nothing, be of no opinion, but live under an indifference to all truths and falsehoods, in a pendulous state of mind; necessitated to act continually in order to some end supposed to be true, and yet doubting whether there be any such thing as truth or no; living under all the agonies and torments of a rooted scepticism.

Thus have I considered largely, and in some measure endeavoured to remove the first ill use that is made of the doctrine of the text by those perverse and unreasonable men, who take an advantage from the confessed obscurity of some parts of scripture, to dispute the authority of it.

I now hasten to mention some other ill uses that are made of what is owned here in the text, that there are in the

inspired writings *things hard to be understood*.

And indeed, after what has been already discoursed, I need do little more than mention them; for to represent them, will be to disprove them.

Secondly, therefore, I observe, that it follows not from thence, as the Romanists would infer, that because of these obscure passages in scripture, there is absolute need of a supreme judge in controversies, who should determine the sense of every text, and among many false meanings of it, infallibly guide us into the only true one. I say, it by no means follows from hence that such a judge is necessary, for this plain reason; because, as we have heard, none of those points that are anyways obscure and doubtful, are necessary to be determined. In these every man may abound in his own sense, and have his own opinions to himself; and if he does but maintain those opinions with sobriety and modesty, without rending the unity, or disturbing the peace of the church, though he may be under an error, yet that error shall not be rigorously imputed to him.

Much less does it follow from hence,

Thirdly, That, because of these obscurities in scripture, therefore the book itself should be taken out of the people's hands. For though there are some things in it hard to be understood, yet many, nay most things there are easy to be understood, as that very expression in St. Peter intimates. And how unreasonable therefore is it, to make some dark passages in holy writ a pretence of locking up all at once, without distinction, from the generality of Christians; because there are a few things there which they cannot understand, therefore to let them understand nothing at all. And this is so much the harder, because (as we have heard) all that is necessary to be understood, is evidently contained in scripture. So that to deprive a man of that which he can understand, and which also it is necessary he should understand, for the sake of somewhat contained in the same book, which he cannot understand, and which it is no matter whether he doth understand or no, is an unreasonable piece of cruelty.

I will be bold to say, that, upon the same grounds that the Roman church denies the people the liberty of reading scripture, she might have debarred them also the privilege of our Saviour's conversation while he lived upon earth. For there were several things in the course of his instructions, hard to be understood; and therefore, for fear of misinterpreting those things, it was convenient, might she have said, that all ignorant, unskilful men should utterly abstain from his company. But our Saviour did not deter the common people from approaching him, because now and then he spake a dark parable. And therefore neither ought they to be withheld from reading his gospel, though there be some hard things there, which perhaps they will read without understanding.

But fourthly, and lastly, These illnesses of the doctrine of the text being removed, the truest and most proper use we can make of it is, from a sense of those things hard to be understood in scripture, to form ourselves into a deep humility and lowliness of mind, in the perusing them; to read that sacred volume with a wise jealousy, and a wary distrust of our own selves; not with a conceited opinion of our own gifts and parts, as if we alone were able to fathom all depths, and to grasp all mysteries. Except ye receive my gospel as a little child, said our Saviour, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mark, x. 15. And except ye read my gospel as a little child, may he be as well supposed to say, with such an humble and teachable temper, with such a freedom from vanity, prepossession, and prejudices, as belongs to that infant state, ye cannot enter into the deep things of it; those things which are expressly said to be revealed to babes, but hidden from the wise. Matt. xi. 25.

Let us therefore weigh and consider what we read as well as we can; but let us not too much indulge our private reasonings upon, and fanciful explications of scripture. When we stick any where, let us modestly consult those who should know better than we, and whose particular business it is to understand and explain this sacred volume. Let us inquire what has been the interpretation generally received in the

church of Christ in the purest ages of it. Or, if that be hard to come at, what is the opinion of our own church, that particular member of the mystical body of Christ, into which it has pleased the divine Providence to engraft us. When we have found it, let us resolve not lightly to vary from it; not without strong reasons and clear convictions to the contrary; and even then to do it with modesty, and be content to enjoy our own private opinions, without endeavouring to make proselytes, or troubling the peace of the church, for the sake of them. Let us pay a due deference, though not a blind obedience, to so great an authority. And let us not reverence her decisions only, but make use of her admirable words also, which she puts into the mouth of every one, who desires to grow in the knowledge of scripture.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N X.

The same Subject continued.

2 Pet. iii. 16.

Which they that are unlearned and unstable, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

FROM the former part of the verse I have already taken occasion to discourse to you largely concerning the obscurity of holy writ. In the latter part of it, which I have proposed now to handle, St. Peter gives us an account of the ill impressions that these difficult parts of scripture make often on the minds of weak Christians; they are wrested by them (he tells us) to their own destruction.

By unlearned men, the apostle means not such as wanted that which we commonly call learning, but such as were not well skilled in divine things. By unstable, such as not being well grounded in the faith, were, upon that account,

easy to be drawn aside into pernicious opinions, and destructive errors. Such, he says, as these, wrest, *i. e.* misunderstand, misapply, and pervert the writings of St. Paul, and the other scriptures: and this they do to their own destruction; that is, to their eternal ruin in another world. So that the meaning of this whole passage is, that some men, not being firmly rooted and grounded in the true faith of Christ, and being by consequence of an uncertain and wavering judgment in matters of religion, were apt to make an ill use of the difficult places of scripture, and to turn them to such a sense as destroyed Christianity; and such therefore as could not but end in the destruction of those who asserted and maintained it.

This at first sight perhaps may seem an hard saying. What, will some men say, shall a man be ruined eternally for a misunderstood place of scripture? Shall they who own the divine authority of holy writ (as it is plain these persons did), and who are studious to know and embrace the true sense of it every where, if in some obscure passages they should mistake it, be answerable for that mistake at the hazard of their salvation?

Better, at this rate, had it been, that the bible should never have been given men, if it be so very fatal a thing to make a wrong exposition, even of the most doubtful and intricate parts of it.

I shall endeavour to give an answer to this complaint, by stating the just bounds, and shewing the great reasonableness, of St. Peter's assertion; and shall then make use of the truth of the text, thus explained and justified, in some observations and inferences that it will afford us.

In order to state the bounds of the assertion, it will be fit to consider, more particularly,

I. What is strictly to be understood here by wresting of scripture.

II. What kind of passages in scripture they were, that are said to have been thus wrested.

I. As to the first of these, it must be considered, that, to wrest scripture, doth in strictness of speech signify, not only to misinterpret and misunderstand it,

out of weakness and ignorance, as any Christian may blamelessly do, but with some degree of perversity and wilfulness to force an unnatural and false construction upon it, in order to make it fall in with our corrupt opinions and prejudices, which we have before-hand entertained, and resolved not to part with. Thus much is intimated by the original word *επιστρέφω*, which signifies, either to detort or turn away, or to torment, and put to the question. In the first of these senses, when applied to scripture, it implies, that these wresters of it bent and warped the straight line and measure of their duty, on purpose to make it suit with their own crooked opinions. In the second (which comes to much the same), that they did, as it were, torment and vex it, till it spake according to their minds.

II. We are to observe, what kind of passages in scripture they were, which these men are said to have wrested. They were such as were hard to be understood (so the preceding words speak), and such as, for that very reason, there was no necessity that they should understand; and yet these men would pretend to understand them, and to be very positive also, and peremptory in their opinions concerning them. Further it appears, that these places treated not of slight indifferent points of doctrine, but of such as were of the utmost concern and moment; such as were the foundations of the Christian faith, and the very pillars that supported the whole frame of religion. I say, it appears, that they treated of such points as these, from the foregoing parts of this chapter, where St. Peter discourses of the day of judgment, of its certainty, and of the wise reasons for which God was pleased to delay it: and represents some men as scoffing at these doctrines, and saying, *Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.* Ver. 4. To convince these scoffers, he urges the authority of St. Paul to them; who in his epistles had maintained the same assertions, not always however expressed with such a degree of evidence and clearness as might be thought necessary to prevent all mistakes; from whence ill men had taken an occasion

to abuse his words to a quite different sense, and to pervert his meaning. So that the points of doctrine to which these wrested texts referred, were great and fundamental ones; and which it was of the last importance to be rightly instructed in. And to this we may add also a

Third remark, That this forced interpretation of obscure passages was in opposition to other plain and evident texts. For since (as I have already discoursed to you) there is no point of moment, but what is somewhere or other plainly and perspicuously delivered in scripture, and since these wrested places of scripture, which St. Peter speaks of, related, as you have heard, to points of moment; it follows, that they who wrested them, did it in contradiction to other plain and perspicuous parts of holy writ.

The full import of the text, therefore, under these several applications, will be, that they who, being misled by pride and vanity, or any other lust and passion, perverted the sense of scripture, in order to make it suit with their own wicked practices, or justify their ill opinions, who vexed and tortured texts in order to make them speak such language as was for their purpose, who did this in passages very hard to be understood, and therefore not necessary to be understood, and in points of doctrine which were of the utmost concern and importance, and interpreted these passages, in relation to these points, quite contrary to other plain and express places of scripture: these men, I say, are very justly and reasonably said to have wrested the scriptures to their own destruction. For surely there was such a complication of insincerity, pride, and obstinacy, in this manner of wresting scripture, as deserved such a condemnation.

And therefore to that question, shall a man be eternally ruined for a misunderstood place of scripture? we answer, Yes doubtless, under those circumstances which we have before explained, if it be a fundamental point, about which he is mistaken, and be much his own fault, that he is mistaken. A misunderstood place of scripture may overthrow one of the prime articles of faith, which God has made necessary to be

believed in order to salvation: or it may destroy the morality of the gospel, by introducing a loose opinion concerning life and manners. By wresting one single passage of holy writ, a man may either deny the Lord who bought him (2 Pet. ii. 1.), or turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness. Jude, iv. And he that does either of these, cannot be said to be severely dealt with, though he be cut off from the mercies of the gospel. For a life led in opposition to the plain practical rules of Christianity, or without that faith which Christianity requires, are either of them a sufficient cause of our condemnation. And therefore such a wilful wresting of scripture as occasions either of these, must in its consequence be damnable, and excuse God in pronouncing this sentence, from all manner of severity or rigour in his dealings with us. This is the account of the true meaning of St. Peter's assertion in the next, and of the justness also, and reasonableness of it. Which points being thus stated and cleared, I come now, as I proposed, to make use of them, in some observations and inferences that they afford us, And,

First, it may be observed, that the scriptures were perverted, and turned by ill men to ill purposes, in the times of the apostles themselves; that they were no sooner written, but they were wrested. From whence we may learn these two things;

1st, That if this happened in the apostles' days, then well might it happen in after ages, especially in this age, which is at so great a distance from the time of the apostles' writing. We may cease to wonder, how it has come to pass, that so many controversies have been started about the sense of scripture, that it has been urged to so many wrong and different purposes, and brought to support and countenance so many heretical opinions, in latter days, when we find that during the lives of St. Paul and St. Peter themselves, it was thus insincerely and unfairly dealt with. The ink was hardly dry, which fell from the apostles' pens, but men began to dispute about the words that were wrote in it; to misconstrue and misapply them, every one to such doctrines as pleased him best; and to draw from

the inspired writings things destructive of faith and salvation, in the face of the inspired authors of them, without asking, or at least without taking their opinions in the point; who surely had been the properest men to have given an account of their own meaning. And if these things were so then, what wonder is it if ever since, and especially now, in these dregs of time; there be wilful men found, who will oppose their own vain fancies and novelties to the general sense of the whole body of Christians, and not submit themselves to such a concurrent testimony in the exposition of scripture, as, though of the utmost moment towards determining our assent, yet falls far short of infallibility and inspiration?

From the same observation also we may learn, in the

2d place, That an unerring expounder of scripture is not so useful and necessary as some men would make us believe it is; because if there were such an one, and he were known and acknowledged to be such by all men, yet would not that secure all men from misinterpreting scripture, as is plain from the instance of the text. The apostles were certainly unexceptionable interpreters of their own writings, and infallible judges of all controversies that could arise from them; and yet notwithstanding this, their writings were in their own time perverted, to countenance erroneous and heretical doctrines; and so doubtless would they be now, though there were an infallible judge upon earth still. And vain therefore is the pretence of our adversaries of the church of Rome, that such an infallible judge is necessary, to assure us of the true sense of scripture, and put an end to all controversies concerning it; since plain it is, that, when there was such an infallible judge, he did not put an end to all controversies of this kind: there were still a great many proud, pertinacious, and opinionative men left, that would not be concluded by him.

Now, if the inferring the necessity of God's acting in such or such a manner, from the convenience that would result to mankind from his so acting, be no very good argument in divinity, even when that convenience is allowed;

what a kind of argument must that be, which would prove the necessity of an infallible judge, from the great expedience of it towards determining all controversies, when even that expedience itself (as we have seen) wants to be proved?

But to go on. We may observe from St. Peter's assertion in the text.

Secondly, What temper of mind, what precautions, what degree of knowledge are requisite, in order to make our inquiries into the obscure parts of scripture, innocent and useful to us. It is plain that this is an attempt of some hazard, and that it may happen to cost us dear, as it did those in the text, if we do not fitly prepare and guard our minds against the danger of it: which may be done, if we manage our searches of this kind by these following rules and directions:

1st, We must take care that the end we propose to ourselves in these inquiries be good and laudable. They must not be entered upon out of mere curiosity and wantonness, nor out of a vain and fruitless desire of knowledge, nor out of a design of being more skillful and learned than other men, and of appearing to understand every thing; but the end of all our searches in this case ought to be, that we may improve in the skill of those divine truths which were on purpose committed to writing, that there might be matter in holy writ, fit always to employ our repeated meditations, and to exercise our strictest attention: that we may by such searches gain to ourselves higher and more enlarged apprehensions of God, a truer and clearer sense of the deep wisdom of all his mysterious dispensations, and may thus raise up our minds to a higher degree of holy admiration, reverence, and awe.

We must intend to qualify ourselves by these searches for the removing the objections raised by those who are no friends to scripture, for the justifying the darkest as well as the brightest parts of it, and making out to fair unprejudiced men the beautiful harmony of all the different but agreeing branches of the divine revelation.

2dly, We must come to this work, as with a right intention, so with a mind

rightly disposed and qualified to pursue that intention: not presuming on our own strength: not with an high opinion and conceit of our particular gifts, abilities, or advantages, as if we alone were able to clear up all difficulties, and to go to the bottom of all mysteries, and that nothing were too hard for us. This is not a temper of mind, either naturally fitted for such a work, or which God delights to bless with supernatural assistances and discoveries. No, if ever we hope to make our inquiries of this kind successful and profitable to us, we must be sure to conduct them with great modesty, and a becoming diffidence and distrust of ourselves, humbly and chiefly relying upon God for his gracious help and assistance; and in order to it, putting up frequent and fervent petitions to that good Spirit which indited the holy scriptures, that he would please to enlighten us with the knowledge of all the deep mysteries contained there. It is humility and devotion that principally qualify us for such searches as these; and will do more by themselves, towards giving a man a true understanding of scripture, than all the gifts and parts in the world will do, when separated from them. For it is true in this instance, as well as in many others, that *God resists the proud, and giveth grace to the lowly*, James iv. 6.

And, as a good way to keep alive and improve this humility of mind in us, let us be sure,

3dly, In our searches of this kind ever to carry this truth along with us (a truth I have largely explained, and proved to you in a former discourse), that there is no place, where writ hard to be understood, that is needful to be understood by us: If we maintain this reflection constantly on our minds, it will teach us not to lay too great stress upon these difficulties, nor to employ too much of our time upon them, so as to be in the least taken off from considering what is more plain and profitable in scripture, what can more easily and usefully be understood, and is indeed more necessary to be understood by us. Some men pore so much and so long upon passages of a disputed meaning, as if they thought it indispensably requisite to determine themselves of one side or

other of the question, as if the whole of religion were concerned in such difficult inquiries: they are so busy in opening and explaining hard places, that they forget to meditate upon plain ones, and to govern their lives under a lively and vigorous sense of the doctrines contained in them: which is doing just as the Pharisees did, *tithing mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and passing over judgment and the love of God*. Luke x. 42. Whereas (as our Saviour in that case decides), *These ought they to have done, and not to have left the other undone*. A due reflection therefore upon this truth, that the understanding the obscure places of scripture is not a thing strictly required of us, or needful for us, will be of use to moderate our too great eagerness in the pursuit of such kind of knowledge; to render us less impatient and uneasy under what we do not understand of it, and less positive and dogmatical in what we do. And thus the two greatest temptations towards perverting scripture will be removed, an excessive curiosity in searches of this kind, and an over-weening fondness for our own private interpretations and opinions.

4thly, If we would not wrest the hard places in scripture, we must be sure to make that an inviolable rule and law to ourselves, never to expound them so as to oppose perspicuous and clear ones: but so to order our interpretation of doubtful points, as to make them fall in with the clear and intelligent parts of the same revelation; so as together with them to make up one complete body of truths, perfectly agreeing with each other.

The best way of knowing whether a line be crooked or not, is to apply it to one that is confessedly straight; and the purest way of not erring in obscure passages is to make plain texts the measure and judge of them. The greatest part of the abuses and misrepresentations of scripture have arisen from a contrary management; from men's giving obscure texts a new and particular sense of their own first, and then growing fond of that notion afterwards, and resolving to bring all the plainest passages in scripture, whether they will or no, to countenance and comply with it.

That we may carry ourselves after a quite different manner in our searches, it is fit for us to observe,

5thly, and lastly, That the safest and securest way of looking into these *δυσόλητα* of St. Paul, and the other holy writers is, to postpone the consideration of them till we have mastered what is sure and easy in scripture, till we have rooted and grounded ourselves in those points of doctrine that lie obvious and open; and when we have done that, there will be no danger of looking into any thing else, let it be never so hard and never so obscure. For either we shall hit upon the right interpretation of it, or, if we do not, the wrong one shall not hurt us. A man that holds all that is plainly contained in scripture, and all that is necessary to be held by him, may in that which is not plain, and not necessary, innocently abound in his own sense. For though he should in these matters mistake in his opinions, and mistake the sense of scripture, upon which he grounds those opinions, yet those mistakes cannot be fatal, because not fundamental. He can never maintain any thing directly repugnant to the Catholic faith, and evidently destructive of it; and while he does not, he may maintain what else he pleases; and so he does it with sobriety and modesty, and a due deference to the opinion of those who have a right to be listened to in these things, his error (if it be one) shall never prove dangerous, or be imputed to him. And this remark is what is plainly suggested to us by the words of the text, where St. Peter tells us, that those which rested the hard places in St. Paul's writings, and the other scriptures, were the unlearned and unstable, that is, (as I told you), those, who being not well grounded in the faith, were easy to be drawn aside into pernicious opinions and destructive errors: from whence it follows, that the best way to secure ourselves from thus perverting what is obscure in scripture is, first, to render ourselves learned and stable in what is plain; and fixing that as our centre, from whence we are not to be removed, we may extend our thoughts and opinions to what circumference we please. That faith which we keep pure and undeviated in fundamentals, shall either enable

us to find out those truths of lesser moment, that perfectly agree with it, or shall excuse us before God, if we should miss of them. There will be a probability from hence of our understanding obscure texts rightly; or if we do not, yet there will be a certainty of our not incurring the guilt of wresting scripture to our own destruction.

Thus have I dispatched the second general observation, which I raised from the text, viz. to consider from thence what temper and qualifications of mind, what precaution and degrees of knowledge are requisite, in order to make our inquiries into the obscure parts of holy writ innocent and useful to us.

I might observe also from hence, in the 3d place, that if perverting obscure passages of scripture be a thing in itself damnable, as St. Peter assures us it is, how much more certainly damnable is it to pervert plain ones? And then infer,

4thly, and lastly also, That if such a sentence be pronounced upon those who wrest scripture, then surely a much higher degree of punishment is reserved for those who affront and ridicule it. But because the first of these points has been already in some measure intimated in the preceding discourse, and there occasionally explained; and because the second is of too extensive and concerning a nature to be now considered, I shall therefore at present insist upon neither of them. They may perhaps employ our reflections on some other opportunity.

SERMON

By BISHOP SENECA

On the Prejudices formed, or Offence taken, against the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW, XI. 6.

Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

In the beginning of this chapter we read, that the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Christ, to inquire of him whether he

was indeed the great Prophet so long expected by the people, and foretold by the Prophets, or whether they were still to expect and wait the coming of another. Our Saviour detained the disciples of John, till he had made them eye-witnesses of the mighty power that was in him. They saw, at the command of his word, the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf restored to hearing, and the dead raised up to life again: they saw likewise that these mighty powers were exercised without giving the least suspicion of any worldly design; that no court was made to the great or wealthy, by singling them out either for patients or for disciples. The benefit of the miracles was chiefly the lot of the poor; and as they were better disposed to receive the gospel, so were they preferred before the rich and mighty to be the disciples of Christ. When the Baptist's disciples had seen and heard these things, our Saviour thought them sufficiently enabled to satisfy John in the inquiry upon which he had sent them: *Go, says he, and shew John those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Then follow immediately the words of the text: *and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

The close connection of the text with the last words of the fifth verse, shews us what sort of persons our Saviour had in his eye, when he spoke of the offence taken at him in the world: *the poor*, says he, *have the gospel preached to them: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* If he had said, the poor are ready to embrace the gospel, and happy are in this, yea happier far notwithstanding their present uncomfortable condition, than the honourable and the learned, who are too great, and in their own opinion too wise to hearken to the instructions of the gospel.

The words thus explained lead us to inquire,

First, What are the offences which are generally taken at the gospel of Christ:

Secondly, From what source these offences come.

The poverty and meanness in which

our Saviour appeared, was the earliest and may probably be the latest objection to the gospel. He came from God to convert and to save the world; to declare the purposes and the commands of the Almighty, and to exact obedience from every creature; but he came with less attendance and shew than if he had been an ordinary messenger from the governor of a province. Hence it is, that we so often find him upbraided either with the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his country, or the present necessity of his circumstances: *Is not this the Carpenter's son?* says one; *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* says another; or *any prophet of out Galilee?* says a third. And when they saw him oppressed with sufferings, and weighed down with afflictions, they openly insulted his sorrow, and triumphed over his fond pretences to save the world: *Thou, say they, that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* And so blinded are men with the notions of worldly greatness, and so apt to conceive of the majesty of God according to their own ideas of power and dignity, that this prejudice has prevailed in every age. The Apostle to the Corinthians preached Christ crucified; but he was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness: for the Jews required a sign, a visible temporal deliverance, and had no notion, much less any want, as they could apprehend of such a Saviour as Jesus. The Greeks sought after wisdom, and thought that, if God were indeed to redeem the world, he would act more suitably to his power and wisdom: whenever they made their Jupiter speak, his voice was thunder, and lightning was his appearance, and he delivered oracles not to be communicated to vulgar ears. So in the Old Testament, when God speaks, clouds and darkness are round about him, and his presence and his voice are terrible. But here every thing had a different turn: the appearance was in the likeness of a man; and in the form of a servant; and, as he came in like a servant, he went out like a slave, he was esteemed stricken, and his departure was taken for misery. His doctrine was framed rather to purify the heart, and to give wisdom to the simple,

than to exercise the head, and furnish matter for the curious and learned; to be a general instruction and a common rule of life to all men, and not to satisfy the vanity of worldly wisdom in inquiries above its reach. With Him the precepts of virtue are the principles of wisdom and holiness, the greatest ornament of the mind of man.

But these things the wise and the great men of the world find hard to reconcile with the wisdom and majesty of God, according to their notions of wisdom and power. Why did not Christ, say they, appear in the power and majesty of his Father? Would not the embassy have been more worthy both of God and of Him? Would any prince, who had a mind to reclaim his rebellious subjects to obedience, not rather chuse to send a person of honour with a suitable retinue, whose appearance might command respect and credit, than an ambassador clothed in rags and poverty, fit only to create in the rebels a greater contempt both of himself and his prince? If it was the purpose of God, that the world through faith should be saved, would not the world more securely and readily have confided in one whose very appearance would have spoke his dignity, than in one who seemed to be even more miserable than themselves, and not able to rescue himself from the vilest and most contemptible death?

But let us now, in the second place, consider what foundation there is in reason for this great prejudice.

It is no wonder to hear men reason upon the notions and ideas which are familiar to them. Great power and great authority are connected with the ideas of great pomp and splendor; and, when we talk of the works of God, our minds naturally turn themselves to view the great and miraculous works of Providence: and this is the reason why men are slow to discern the hand of God in the ordinary course of nature, where things, being familiar to us, do not strike with wonder and admiration.

When Naaman the Syrian came to the prophet of Israel to be cured of his leprosy, Elisha sent a messenger unto him saying, *Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.* The haughty Sy-

rian disdained the easy cure, and scorned the prophet: Is this your man of God, and this his mighty power to send me to a pitiful river of Israel? *Behold,* says he, *I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?* So he turned, and went away in a rage. But his servants, not a little wiser than their master, thus reason the case with him: *My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?* Upon this gentle rebuke his stomach came down; and he condescended to follow the prophet's direction; *and his flesh came again, like the flesh of a young child, and he was clean.* Not unlike to Naaman's folly is theirs, who take offence at the poverty and meanness of the Author of our redemption. His sentiments and theirs agree: he expected to have seen some surprising wonder wrought for his cure; and, when he was bid only to wash, he thought there could be nothing of God in so trifling a remedy. And is not this their sense, who think that so obscure, so mean a person as Jesus, could never be the messenger of God upon so great an errand as the salvation of the world? who thus expostulate, Why came he not in a majesty suitable to his employment; and then we would have believed him; but how can we expect to be raised to the glory of God by him who was himself the scorn and contempt of men?

If we search this prejudice to the bottom, we shall find that it arises from a false conception of the power and majesty of God, as if the success of his purposes depended upon the visible fitness of the instruments he made choice of. With men we know the case is so; they must use means which they can judge to be adapted to the end they aim at: if they intend to prosper in what they undertake: but with God, it is otherwise. To stop the current even of the smallest river, banks must be raised, and sluices cut; when the work is done by man: but in the hand of God the rod of Moses was

more than sufficient to curb the rage of the sea, and force it to yield a passage to his people. *The foolishness of God*, says the Apostle, *is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men*; teaching us that we should not presume to sit in judgment upon the methods of providence; since, how foolish or how weak soever they may seem to us, they will be found in his hand to be the wisest and the strongest. And this reasoning the Apostle applies to the case now before us: *The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto all them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men.* However the Jews, or however the Greeks conceived of the crucified Jesus, yet to every believer he is the mighty power of God to salvation, because God ordained him so to be; and this ordination gives full efficacy to the cross of Christ, however in itself contemptible, and to all human appearance unfit for the purpose. The waters of Jordan had no natural efficacy to cleanse a leper; in the rod of Moses there was no power to divide the sea; but, when ordained by God to these purposes, the sea fled back at the touch of Moses's rod, and the leprosy of Naaman was purged by the so much despised waters of Israel. If we would judge truly, the more simple and plain the methods of providence are, the more do they speak the power of the Almighty. When God said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, his uncontrollable power more evidently appeared, than if all the angels of heaven had been employed to produce it. When our Lord said, *I will, be thou clean*, and the person was cleansed, his divinity shone forth more brightly, than if he had commanded the powers above visibly to assist him, or likewise, when God committed the redemption of the world to Jesus, a man of sorrow and affliction, and of no form or comeliness, and gave him the power of doing such works as never man did, in confirmation of his commission, he appeared as plainly in him, as if he had clothed him with visible majesty and power. If we consider him afflicted and tormented, and given up to a cruel death,

it proves indeed that he was weak and mortal; but still God is strong, and not the less able to establish the word which he spoke by this weak, this mortal man.

As to this part of the offence then, so far as the majesty and power of God are concerned; it proceeds from very wrong notions in both cases, and supposes that the majesty of God wants the same little supports of outward pomp and grandeur as that of men does, and that his power depends upon the fitness of instrumental or material causes, as human power plainly does; whereas the majesty and power of God are never more clearly seen, than when he makes choice of the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

Let us then in the next place consider, with respect to men, whether the advantages on their side would have been greater, had Christ appeared in greater splendor, and with more visible power and authority.

How far the imaginations of some men may rove upon such inquiries as these, or what degrees of splendor and glory they would judge sufficient for their purpose, I cannot tell. This we are sure of, that the majesty of the Almighty is not to be approached by human eyes; that therefore, whenever it descends to treat with men, it must be veiled and obscured under such representations as men can bear. This is true, you'll say; but is there no medium between the immediate presence of God, and his appearing in the form of a servant, and dying, not as the children of men commonly die, but as the vilest and most profligate criminal? Many degrees there are, no doubt, of visible glory, in any of which Christ might have appeared, but in none with greater advantage to religion than that in which he came. Suppose he had come, as the Jews expected, in the form of a mighty prince, and in that situation had propagated his faith and doctrine; what would the unbelievers then have said? How often should we have been told before now, that our religion was the work of human policy, and that our Prince's doctrine and dominions were extended by the same sword? Was ever any religion the better thought of for having been preached at the head of an army? This is certain,

that, to make religion a rational act of the mind, it cannot be conveyed to us in too easy and familiar a manner: the less awe we have of our teacher, the more freedom we shall exercise in weighing and examining his doctrines. And upon this account our Saviour's appearance was in the most proper form, as it gave to men the greatest scope and liberty of trying and searching into his doctrines and pretences: and therefore his meanness and poverty should least of all be objected by those who seem to contend for nothing more than to clear religion from fears and prejudices.

But perhaps they will say, we wanted him not to appear in worldly state and glory, or to exercise temporal dominion on earth; we would have been contented with a visible, though an inferior kind of manifestation of his divine authority. *O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written!* What think ye of giving sight to the blind; of opening the ears of the deaf; of loosening the tongue that was dumb; of restoring health to the sick; of raising the dead to life again; of raising even himself from the grave, and abolishing the scandal of the cross by a visible victory and triumph over death? What do you call these things? What do they manifest to you? Are these the works of that mean man, that wretched, that crucified mortal, of whom we have been speaking? Do slaves and servants, nay, do princes and the greatest of the children of men, use to perform such works? If not, these are the very manifestations of divine power and authority which you require. Nor can it, I believe, enter into the heart of man to contrive any greater signs to ask of any person pretending to a divine commission, than these which our Saviour daily and publicly gave the world of his authority. Had he appeared with all the visible power and glory which you can conceive, yet still you cannot imagine what greater works than these he could possibly perform: and therefore the evidence now, under all the meanness of his appearance, is the same for his divine authority and commission, as it would have been, had he come in the greatest pomp of glory and power.

As to us, I think, who are removed

at a distance from the scene of this action, the evidence is much greater. Had he come in surprising glory, we might have suspected the relations of men, who, we might well think, saw and heard every thing under the greatest astonishment, and, like St. Paul when he was caught up to the third heaven, could hardly tell whether they were in the body, or out of the body. But now we have the evidence of men who lived and conversed with him familiarly, who saw all his mighty works, and saw them without surprise or astonishment, being reconciled to them by daily use, and the long-experienced gentleness and love of their Master; and therefore they very justly introduce their accounts with this assurance. *That they relate that only which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled, of the word of life.* So far are we then from having any just cause of offence in the poverty and meanness of our blessed Lord, that from those circumstances arises the great stability of our faith, and this comfortable assurance, that our faith standeth not in the words or in the works of man's wisdom and power, but in the power and in the wisdom of the Almighty, who knows how to produce strength out of weakness.

SERMON XII.

The same Subject continued.

MATTHEW, xi. 6.

Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

I HAVE already examined the first and great prejudice against the gospel, arising from the poverty and meanness of our blessed Lord, and the low condition of life in which he appeared in the world, and the wretched circumstances which put an end to it; and shewed it to be so far from being a just offence against the gospel, that, when fairly considered, it serves to recommend religion to us with all possible advantage, and the more eminently to set forth the love of Christ, and the

wisdom and goodness of God, in the gospel.

It was from the offence taken at the mean condition of our Lord, that the cross became a *stumbling-block to the Jews*. It became also, as the Apostle says, *foolishness to the Greeks*; for they sought after wisdom, and not finding the wisdom they sought after in the gospel, it was esteemed by them as foolishness.

The great articles upon which all religion depends, are the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments in another life after this. These things have ever exercised the wit and learning of the considering part of mankind, and philosophy has furnished difficulties on every side; and, were they well cleared up, it is thought religion would want no other support. But in vain do you search the gospel of Christ for a solution of these difficulties; he has not so much as entered into them, or once attempted to give an account of the nature or essence of God, or of an human soul, or to consider the difficulties that are urged by the schools against its separate existence from the body. Future rewards and punishments he has indeed fully asserted; but, as to the nature and manner of them, and the soul's existence in each state, he has left them involved in the same intricacies in which he found them. And yet, say the disputers of this world, who would not expect from a person sent from God to have all his difficulties solved which affect the belief and practice of religion? We are bid to be good and holy, and are promised immortality: so far 'tis well. But did he not know what doubts exercise the most learned men concerning the nature of God, and of the soul, and its passage to another world, and concerning the place and condition of that other world? Why were not these doubts cleared? Had he opened to us this dark scene of nature, and made us to understand the contexture of the soul, and its manner of subsisting out of the body; had he taught us to comprehend the state and nature of the other world, such doctrines, such discoveries would have been sufficient evidence of the divine wisdom: but now we are only taught the plain doctrines of

morality, and are bid to take his word for our immortality.

To clear up this great and unreasonable offence against the gospel, I desire you would consider with me the following particulars.

First, That the objection does not lie properly against the gospel of Christ; but if there be any sense in it, it must rise higher, and strike at the wisdom and goodness of God in the creation; for, if any fault is to be found in this matter, it is not with Christ for not teaching us more wisdom than we are capable of, but with God for not making us wiser than we are. And hence it will appear, that the objection is both impious and senseless.

Secondly, That this objection, allowing it its full force, does no way affect the belief or practice of religion; because religion depends entirely upon the certainty of the soul's immortality, and of a future state of rewards and punishments; which certainly no way depends upon the knowledge of the nature of the things themselves, since we are and may be certain of many things, the nature of which we neither do nor can know. And hence it will appear, that the difficulties arising from the consideration of the nature of these things cannot affect our belief of the certainty of them, if it be supported by proper evidence; and, consequently, that religion is no way concerned to remove these difficulties. And,

Thirdly, That the gospel has given us the greatest evidence for the certainty and reality of these things, that can be thought on or desired. And hence it will appear, that the doctrines of the gospel are such as are adapted to the service of religion, and as might be expected from a teacher divinely inspired.

And first, Let it be considered, that this objection does not lie against the gospel of Christ; but, if there be any force in it, it strikes immediately at the wisdom and goodness of God in the creation.

As long as men keep to the plain simple points in which religion is concerned, there is no danger of their splitting upon these insuperable difficulties. If they seek after God, the whole creation will lead them to him; for the invisible things

of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead. If they search after the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, these truths will be suggested to them from their own natural sense of good and evil, and the notions of God's wisdom, and justice, and goodness, compared with the present unequal distributions of rewards and punishments; which can be accounted for upon no other foot, nor reconciled to the natural sense God has implanted in us of the difference of good and evil, and the notions we have of his excellency and perfection. But, if they launch out into philosophical inquiries, and, not content to know that God is, without knowing what he is, endeavour to pry into the nature and manner of the existence of the Almighty; or if, not satisfied with the moral certainty of a future state, they want to look into the texture of the soul, and to see there the natural seeds of immortality; 'tis no wonder if they make shipwreck both of their reason and their faith at once: for this knowledge is too high for men. God has not given us faculties to enable us to comprehend these mysteries of nature; and therefore we must always of necessity wander out of the way, and be bewildered, when we search after them. For let any man consider whence it is that the difficulty of these inquiries ariseth: 'tis not for want of teaching, for all the teaching in the world will not enable men to comprehend the things of which they can form no notions or ideas. And this is the case: the seeds of this knowledge are not implanted in our nature, and therefore no cultivation can ever produce it. There is nothing which ever fell under the notice of our senses, to which the existence and being of God can be likened, nothing that bears any proportion of similitude to the natural frame and make of our souls: and therefore 'tis impossible to represent these things to the mind of man; for 'tis not in the power of any sound of words to create new notions or ideas in our mind, or to convey new knowledge without them. God has set bounds to our knowledge by

limiting our faculties beyond which our utmost care and diligence, however directed, cannot advance. We never attain or excellency in knowledge by going beyond our teacher, the immortal Spirit, who infuse more into us than we are capable of receiving; as a vessel can receive more than its measure, though it be filled out of the sea.

This being the state and condition of men, it had been to little purpose, if our blessed Lord had attempted to pry them into the knowledge of those great secrets of nature, which the curious and learned are so desirous of prying into. His business was to instruct them in the way of virtue and holiness, to awaken their sleepy souls and rouse their stupid consciences to a sense of goodness, to show them the way to peace and happiness, by setting before them the precepts of God and nature in their true uncorrupted purity: and this he has done, even by the confession of his greatest enemies, who in this part have nothing to object, but that his laws are too good and too holy for their observance. 'Tis the great excellency of a teacher to speak to the sense and understanding of the people; and, whenever he rises above them, he is lost in the clouds, and his words are mere air and sound: and therefore, whatever wisdom and knowledge were in our blessed Saviour, 'tis folly to expect from him any greater degrees of either, than we are capable of comprehending. As he was our prophet and teacher, it was his business to be understood; and he forbore teaching us the deep mysteries of nature, for the same reason that we do not teach children Algebra, not that we envy them the knowledge, but that we know they are incapable of it. Instead of improving the nature of man, he must have destroyed it, and new-created him, to have made him capable of a clear insight into all the mysteries which the curious seem desirous of knowing. And, could he have given us all the knowledge we thirst after, yet still the way to happiness would be the same, and we could do nothing to set forward our salvation, which he has not already both instructed and enabled us to do: and therefore, as the case stands, he has fully performed

"You say, 'I am ignorant any
 farther than I am of the cause with
 God.' But, with Christ: he has taught
 you, and you were capable of know-
 ing the mind of God, why
 he made you no better and no wiser.
 And if he has, you'll say; been better,
 if God has given us such enlarged facul-
 ties, he might have enabled us to sur-
 mount all difficulties of this kind? If
 you ask me, I can readily answer, that I
 had rather I were an angel than a man;
 but I know, of no, right I had to be
 either; and that I am either, is owing
 purely to the goodness and beneficence of
 my Creator. Had he left me still in the
 lump of clay out of which I was formed,
 he had done me no injury, nor could any
 complaint have been formed against him
 on my behalf. For what I have, I have
 reason to be thankful; for what I have
 not, I have no reason to complain.

Had God indeed given us only the faculties of men, and required of us the service of angels, we might then with some justice have lamented the unequal weight: but now that he requires nothing of us but what we are able to perform, and what, according to our present degree of understanding, it is highly reasonable we should perform, it is great perverseness to hang back for want of more light, and a greater capacity to understand what it is no way necessary for us to understand. Our present faculties, if rightly applied, will lead us to a certainty of the being of a God, to the knowledge of his excellency and perfection, and will instruct us wherein our reasonable service to him does consist: and shall we, when we know there is an all-sufficient being, and that it is our duty to serve him, shall we, I say, suspend our duty, because we meet with great difficulties in trying to comprehend his nature and manner of existence? As weak as we are, we may assuredly know, *that God will one day judge the world in righteousness, and reward every man according to his doings*: and shall we not listen to this great motive to obedience, because we are not able to know how the soul can

act distinctly from the body, or how it can be united to it again? It would be altogether as reasonable for a merchant not to trade to the Indies, though he is sure there is great wealth and riches there, till he can account to himself for the nature of all the surprising objects in that other world; or for a man not to eat, though he is sure it would nourish and support his life, till he can see the reason of nutrition, and give an account of all the secret ways by which nature performs the work.

God has given us knowledge sufficient to be the foundation of our duty; and, if we will use the light we have, we shall be happy. The great mistake which men commit in reflecting upon these matters, is, That they suppose they should have better evidence for the things of another world, could they overcome these difficulties, which cross them perpetually in the search after nature: And this would indeed be a real advantage to religion, if it were so; but that it is not, will appear in the following considerations: For,

Secondly, The difficulties which arise in considering the natural properties of things, do no way affect the certainty and reality of their existence: If they did, we could be certain of the real existence of no one thing; since there is nothing but what affords us very great difficulties, when we come to account for the nature and properties of it. Let what will be the subject, I think, there cannot be two more different inquiries, than when we examine whether the thing really is, and when we examine what it is: They are inquiries which do not at all depend one upon the other. We can examine the properties of some things, without so much as reflecting whether there ever were such things, or no. When the mathematician considers the properties of an exact circle or square, it matters him not whether there be such perfect figures in the world, or no; nor does he trouble himself to inquire. So, on the other hand, we can examine and come to the certainty of the existence of things, without knowing, or attempting to know, their natures and properties. The peasant knows there

is a Sun and a Moon, as well as the astronomers; and his certainty, as to their existence, is as great and as well-grounded as theirs. Nor is this only true in things which are objects of sense, but will hold likewise with respect to such things, the existence of which we collect from reason. From visible effects to invisible causes the argument is conclusive; though in many cases it extends only to the reality of the cause, and does not in the least lead us to the knowledge of the nature of it. When we see distempers cured by the use of plants or of drugs, some virtue we are sure there is in them, upon which the effect depends, though what we seldom or never can tell. This being the case then, That we can arrive at the knowledge of the existence of things, when we are perfectly ignorant of their natures and properties; and can, on the other side, examine and know the properties of things, without considering whether they exist, or no; 'tis plain that these are distinct acts of knowledge, which do not depend on each other, and that we may be certain as to the reality of things, however we may be puzzled and confounded when we enter into the consideration of their nature.

And now pray consider, as to the case before us, what sort of knowledge it is that is necessary to support religion in the world. If we are sure there is a God who will judge the world, is not that a sufficient foundation for holiness? Does it signify any thing, as to the necessity of our obedience, to inquire into the manner or nature of his being? Does not the whole religion evidently depend on this question, Whether there certainly be a God who will judge the world? And, if it appears there is, is it of any consequence to say, there are great difficulties in conceiving how these things can be? For, if they certainly will be, there will be some way or other, no doubt; and it concerns not us to know, which way. Since therefore our Saviour has given the greatest evidence that can be of the certainty of a future state, and the soul's existence after death, 'tis impertinent and unphilosophical to confront this evidence with difficulties

which are raised against it. It is in the nature of knowledge, that it is not to be shaken from our minds, nor is it an argument, which should be ashamed of, than to dispute with the clear evidence of the certainty and reality of things themselves. Were this done, it would set the great controversy upon the right foot, which stands on this single point. Whether there be sufficient evidence of a future state, or no? For, if such a state there be, let our conceptions concerning it be right or not clear, most certainly we shall be brought to account for all we do; which is enough, I think, to make us careful what we do. And this is the main concern of religion, and that which will secure whatever is necessary to it.

Since then religion evidently depends upon the certainty and reality of a future state of rewards and punishments, and other the like articles, and not in the least upon the knowledge of the nature or the philosophical account of these things; it had been absurd in our Saviour, who was a preacher of religion only, a teacher sent from God, to have entered into those difficulties, which did not at all belong to his province. And, since neither the practice of religion would have received any advantage by the discussion of these doubts, for if we had the knowledge of angels, and saw the heavens as plainly as they do, yet the same virtue and holiness, without any change, would be necessary to carry us thither; nor the motives of religion would have gained any new strength, since the evidence for the reality of a future state is not affected by these doubts; it is ridiculous to expect the solution of them in the gospel, when, if solved, they would not serve any one point in which the gospel is concerned, but would end in mere philosophy and speculation.

But perhaps it may be said, that all this is true indeed, where the existence of things is out of doubt: in that case no difficulties can destroy the evidence of their existence. But, where the existence of things is doubtful, there the

besides, as to difficulties in nature and philosophy, he has not indeed taught us to answer them; but he fully answered them himself, when he came from the grave; as he who got up and walked, baffled all the philosophers' arguments against motion.

'Tis true, you will say, this is very good evidence, but you find it hard to believe: And perhaps you might have been as hard of belief, if our Saviour had reasoned never so philosophically. The question is, Whether any objection lies against the gospel for overlooking the difficulties which learned men raise? I have shewed that none can lie, and that the gospel has given a much better evidence than that which is desired: And this is sufficient to remove the offence taken upon the account of this supposed defect in the gospel. If you believe not the gospel, that alters not the case: The evidence is not the worse for that; for neither would you believe perhaps, *though one rose from the dead.*

There are two things which our resurrection to life depends upon. We learn from our Saviour's answer to the Sadducees: *ye do err, says he, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*: which answer is a very clear one; for we can desire no more than to know that God certainly can raise us, and that he certainly will. The first is to be learnt from our natural notions of God; the second from the scripture, which is the declaration of his will to mankind. As to the power of God, it cannot be brought into question, without throwing off all pretence even to natural religion: for if you allow God, that he made the world, and formed man into a living soul in the beginning; you cannot deny but that He, who made man out of nothing at first, can as easily make him again, after death has dissolved the vital union. It remains then to inquire after the will of God, Whether He, who certainly can, certainly will raise us at the last day? The time will not permit me to enter largely into the argument; and therefore I shall rest it upon one, but that a very clear point. It will not be denied but that we have our Saviour's promise and word for our resurrection often repeated in the gospel: and consider, pray, did not he raise many dead to life again? Did he not at last raise himself from the grave, after he had been three days buried? Is it not plain then, upon the gospel account, that he had the power of raising the dead? and is it not as plain that he has promised to raise us? Take both propositions together then, and they will amount to this; that He, who has the power of raising the dead, has promised and declared that he will raise us from the dead. God, we know, cannot lie, and therefore must ratify every word which *he spake by his only child Jesus*: And hence arises a security which no doubts can shake.

SERMON XIII.

The same subject concluded.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THE prejudices which men are apt to conceive against the gospel, are of different kinds, according to the different views under which they consider it. When they set themselves to examine the pretensions it has to be a divine revelation, they stumble at the meanness and poverty of its Author; imagining that, if God were to send a person into the world upon so considerable an errand, he would clothe him with a majesty becoming one immediately commissioned by himself, and which might better support the great undertaking: Or if they consider the gospel as the word of God, given to men for their instruction in all things pertaining to the service of God, they expect to find all their doubts and difficulties removed, which are any way related to the cause of religion; such, for instance, as

relate to the nature of the soul, its manner of subsisting out of the body, and to the nature and condition of the future state which we are bid to expect : And, not finding these difficulties considered and removed, they are apt to conclude that this revelation has not all the marks of wisdom which are to be expected in one coming immediately from God.

These offences have been already considered : But, as some are offended at the gospel for not clearing the doubts and difficulties which encumbered the notions of religion before, so others take offence at the new doctrines introduced into religion by the gospel, and complain of the hardship put upon them in requiring them to believe things which are not suggested to them by natural reason, nor are to be maintained by it. Even of our Saviour's disciples we find many offended at his doctrine, and complaining to each other, *This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ?* And so far did their prejudice prevail, *that they went back, and walked no more with him.*

The gospel, it is said, contains many mysterious truths : And what purpose of religion can be served by our receiving articles of faith which we do not understand ? Shall we be the better men for it ? Will it make us more just, or holy, or beneficent to our brethren ? Will it promote the honour of God to represent him as requiring such conditions from us, the end or use of which we cannot discern ? Or, will it recommend religion to the world ? Will men be the more forward to submit, when they must first renounce their sense and understanding, and cease to be rational, in order to be religious ?

This is a very heavy charge, and, were it as true as it is heavy, might possibly shake the foundations of the gospel. But to set this matter in a clear light, I must desire you to observe the different notions which belong to the word *Mystery* in the use of the gospel, and in vulgar use among men at this time : And, by thus distinguishing the use or sense of the word, it will appear,

First, That the objection does not reach the gospel sense or use of the word, nor can affect the mysteries contained in the gospel : And,

Secondly, That the use and sense of

the word, which is objected to this objection, does not any way relate to the gospel ; nor are there any mysteries in the gospel as many justify the complaint made against them.

First then, If you look into the sacred Writers, you will find, That the design of that gospel, the dispensation of Providence in the salvation of mankind, is styled a mystery ; *the hidden wisdom of God, which was kept secret since the world began : A mystery 'tis called, because it was kept secret since the world began, God not having opened or declared his gracious purposes before the coming of Christ.* With respect to this time of secrecy and silence, the gospel is called a mystery ; but, upon the revelation of it by Christ Jesus, it is no longer looked upon as a mystery, but as the manifestation of God's will and goodness to men. Thus you will find St. Paul speaking in the last of the Romans : *The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the Prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith :* That is, this great work was a mystery in all ages, being kept secret in the counsels of God ; but, since the coming of Christ, 'tis no longer a mystery, but is manifest and made known to all nations and people. Here then, you see plainly, the opposition is between mystery and revelation : What God has reserved to himself, without communicating the knowledge of it to the world, that is a mystery ; what he has revealed, is no longer a mystery, but a manifestation of his will and purpose. In this sense, I presume, there lies no objection against the gospel : That it was once hidden in the secret counsels of Providence, but is now, by the revelation of Christ Jesus, made known to all men, can afford us no matter of complaint, but may administer to us great joy, and be a subject of praise and glory to God, inasmuch as our eyes have seen, and our ears heard, those things, which many righteous men and prophets have desired to see, and have not seen them, and to hear, and have not heard them.

As the gospel itself is in this sense styled a mystery, so are the several parts

of it likewise: *I shew you a mystery*, says St. Paul; *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*. He did not mean that he would shew them what they could not comprehend, but that he would declare to them the purpose of God, which they were ignorant of. The same use of the word you may meet with in our blessed Saviour himself: When he had described the future state of the church in parables to the Jews, and came afterwards to explain them to the disciples, he tells them the reason of his proceeding: *Because*, says he, *unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given*. All futurities, because known only to God, are mysteries; but, when revealed, they are no longer so, being made known and manifest. Thus, 'tis plain, St. Paul uses the word in 1 Cor. xiii. where he joins the gift of prophecy and the knowledge of mysteries together: *Though I have*, says he, *the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge*: Where 'tis plain what he means by mysteries, since they are to be understood by the gift of prophecy. In the fourth chapter of the same epistle, he shews what account we are to make of our pastors and teachers: *Let a man*, says he, *so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*. His meaning is not, that they were preachers of mysteries in the vulgar notion of it, that is, of things which nobody can understand; but that God had entrusted them with his purposes and intentions in the salvation of mankind, which they, like good stewards, were to dispense to the whole family, by declaring and revealing the whole will of God.

The same Apostle says, Chap. ii. 7. *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery*; and in the next words explains what he means by mystery, *even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory*: and in the tenth verse he tells us, this is no longer hidden, but the mystery is laid open; *God having revealed it unto us by his Spirit*. In the same sense we read of the *mystery of faith*; where we are not to understand the Apostle to mean incomprehensible articles of faith, but the revelations of God's purposes and designs, which through faith we

receive, and are therefore styled the mysteries of faith.

In this sense the gospel is full of mysteries, as containing the secret purposes of God's hidden wisdom in the redemption of the world, which were made manifest by Christ Jesus, *who brought life and immortality to light*. Against this gospel sense of mystery the common objections have no force; since mysteries here are not understood to be such things as reason cannot receive, but such things as proceed from the hidden wisdom of God, and are made manifest in the gospel of Christ.

Let us then, in the second place, proceed to shew, that the notion of mysteries, against which the objection lies, does not belong to the gospel. The objection represents a mystery as a thing inconceivable, and altogether irreconcilable to human reason. But such mysteries there are none in the gospel of Christ. If men, learned or unlearned, have run themselves into contradictions by endeavouring to explain the mysteries of God farther than he has explained them, he that to themselves: let not the gospel be charged with their errors and mistakes. Nothing indeed has proved more fatal to religion, than the vain attempts of men to dive into the unrevealed mysteries of God, and to account for, upon principles of human reason, the things which proceed from the hidden wisdom of God. All the secret purposes of Providence are, in the sense of the scripture, mysteries; as likewise all knowledge which God has not revealed. Of such mysteries are there many: but then they concern not us to inquire after; if they did, God would reveal them to us. God has declared to us, that he has an only-begotten Son, and that he was the person who came down from heaven for our deliverance: that he has an Holy Spirit, who shall sanctify our hearts, and be assisting to us in working out our salvation. This, and agreeable to this, is the scripture doctrine: and a man would be put to it to fix any absurdity, or so much as seeming contradiction, upon this doctrine, or any thing said concerning it in scripture. Concerning these persons there are indeed exceeding great mysteries, which are not revealed: God has not told us, or enabled

us to conceive, how his son and his Spirit dwell in him, or how they came from him. These therefore are properly mysteries, which are hidden in the secret wisdom of God, and which we are nowhere called upon to inquire after. It is easy, I think, to take God's word, that he has a Son and a Spirit, who dwell with him and in him from all eternity; a Son who came to our assistance, a Spirit who is ever with us to guide us into truth: these things, I say, are easy to be believed, without entering into the difficulties arising from natural and philosophical inquiries, which the Scripture nowhere encourages us to seek after: and, as long as men keep close to the rule and doctrine of scripture, they will find no cause to enter into the great complaints raised against mysteries. The scripture has revealed indeed wonderful things to us, and for the truth of them has given us as wonderful evidence; so that they are well qualified to be the objects of our faith: for such God designed them, and not for the exercise of our vanity and curiosity, or, as you call it, of our reason. If it is not reasonable to believe God upon the Gospel evidence, there is an end of all mysteries; but, if it is reasonable, there must be an end of all further inquiries: and I think common sense will teach us not to call God to account, or pretend to enter into the reason of his doings.

SERMON XIV.

By the Rt. R. THOMAS SHERLOCK, D.D.

Lord Bishop of London.

Salvation by Jesus Christ.

HEBREWS, vii. 25.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

WHEN we consider the great and wonderful work of our redemption, though we cannot account for every step of it to our own reason and understanding, yet neither can we imagine it to be the effect of mere will and arbitrary appointment, and void of all foundation in the

reason and propriety of things. All the works of God are works of wisdom: and, as far as our capacities give us leave to judge, we discern evident marks of wisdom in them all, and discover a fitness and propriety in every thing with respect to the end which it is intended to serve or promote. If this be so in every instance in which we are able to make any judgment, it is a great presumption that it is, and must be so, in all other instances, which are too high and great to be viewed and measured by human understanding: and we have one positive argument that it is so, arising from the natural notion we have of God, and of his attributes of wisdom and justice. It is impossible to suppose such a Being to do any thing by chance, or in compliance to mere will and humour. No: every act of God is the act of infinite wisdom, and is founded in the necessary reason and propriety of things: and it is as true of the works of grace, as it is of the works of nature, that in wisdom he has ordained them all.

It is one thing not to be able to discern the reasons of Providence, and another to suppose there is no reason in them. The reasons, that made it either necessary or proper for Christ to die for the sins of mankind, may be removed out of our sight: but to suppose that Christ really did die for the sins of the world, and yet that there was no reason or propriety in his so doing, is to found revealed religion upon a principle destructive of natural religion; for no religion can subsist, with an opinion that God is a Being capable of acting without reason.

The publication of the Gospel has made an alteration in the scheme of religion, by revealing to us the Son of God, *whom God hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; who uphieldeth all things by the word of his power.* Heb. 1, 2, 3.

The knowledge of the Son of God, of his power and dominion in the creating and upholding all things, became necessary, as the foundation of the faith required to be placed in him as our Redeemer. The character of Redeemer would be but ill supported by any person

who had not power equal to the great undertaking. The New Testament doctrines, therefore, relating to the dignity and authority of Jesus Christ, are relative to his office of Redeemer; and therefore there was no explicit declaration of them either before or under the law of Moses.

Natural religion leads us by certain conclusions to the acknowledgement of one supreme intelligent Being, the Author and Creator of all things, and can by no reasoning whatever discover any other being concerned in the making, framing, or governing the world; and therefore all the hopes and fears; in a word, all the religious acts of man, in the state of natural religion, are necessarily and immediately relative to this one Supreme Being. But put the case, that natural religion could possibly discover that this one Supreme Being had an eternal Son, to whom he had communicated all power and authority, who was the immediate Creator, Governor, and Judge of mankind; I beseech you to consider, whether, upon this supposition, there would not necessarily arise an alteration in natural religion; whether the hopes and fears, and all other religious acts of mankind, would not relate immediately to this their immediate Creator, Governor, and Judge. Can it be reasonably supposed, that we were created by the Son of God, that we are now under his government, and shall be finally under his judgment; and at the same time maintain, that no service, obedience, or regard is due to him from us his creatures and subjects? If this cannot be maintained consistently with this supposition, the conclusion will be, that the religion of a Christian is a natural and reasonable service, arising from the relation between Christ and mankind, which the Gospel has revealed and made known to the world.

When we consider what expectations we have from our Redeemer, and what great promises he has made to us in his Gospel, we cannot possibly avoid inquiring who this person is: when we hear his promise to be always present with us to the end of the world, to support us under all our difficulties, it is but a reasonable demand to ask by what autho-

rity he does these things; and when we are told that he liveth for ever, and is the Lord of life and glory, there is no room to doubt of his being able to save us. St. Paul tells us, that the Lord Jesus Christ *shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*: a great expectation this! But consider what the reasonable foundation of this expectation is: St. Paul tells us, it is the energy of power with which Christ is endued, *whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. Our Saviour puts this article upon the same foot. Hear his declaration: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*. In the next verse the reason follows: *For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*. John v. 25, 26. If the Son hath life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself; if he is really endued with power to which all nature submits and obeys, a power sufficient for the creation of the world at first, and for the preservation ever since; we have reason to conclude, that he is now as able to restore life, as he was at first to give it; to call men from the grave into being, as well as to call them out of nothing at the first creation.

The relation of Christ to mankind as Creator and Governor considered, the work of redemption could not properly have been undertaken by any other hand; for, if Christ was the immediate Creator and Governor of the world, what reason can you imagine why God should resume this authority out of the hands of his Son, or set up another to have dominion and authority over any part of the creation, which by natural right belonged to him, who made all things? Were we to consider one person as our Creator, and another as our Redeemer, it would be extremely to the diminution of the honour and regard due to the Creator, inasmuch as the blessing of redemption would greatly outweigh the benefit of creation; and it would be natural to us to prefer the love that delivered us from the evils and miseries of the world, to that which placed us in them. In the daily service of our church we praise God for creating

and preserving us, but above all for his inestimable love in the redemption; which is very consistent with respect to one great benefactor, who both made us and redeemed us: but, had any other hand redeemed us, such expression of gratitude to him would have reflected dishonour upon the Creator.

St. Paul tells us expressly, that Christ is head of the church; a title founded in the right of redemption, *that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*; that, as he was the head of all creatures in virtue of having created them, so he might be the head of the church, the elect people of God, in virtue of having redeemed them: *for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*; that is, that Christ should be all in all, the head of the second as well as of the first creation. Coloss. i. 19. According to St. Paul's reasoning here, if any other person had redeemed the world, or if the world had been redeemed without Christ, he would not have had the pre-eminence in all things; which yet he had before sin came into the world: and, consequently, the sin of the world would have been the diminution of the headship and power of Christ. Upon these principles of the Gospel revelation we may discern some propriety in Christ's coming to redeem the world; the work was such, that no person of less power could undertake it; and his relation to the world was such, as made it fit and proper to commit the work to him.

The redemption of mankind is a work which in the event seems to concern men only: but, considered as a vindication of the justice and goodness of God towards his creatures, it is a work exposed to the consideration of every intelligent being in the universe. Whether they may be supposed to inquire into God's dealings with the children of men, we may judge by ourselves. It is little we know of the fall of angels; yet how has that employed human curiosity! for every man considers himself as having an interest in the justice and equity of that Supreme Being, under whose government he lives, and by whose judgment he must finally stand or fall. If we doubt whether the superior order of beings have the like inclination, St. Peter will tell us, *that the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should fol-*

low, are things the angels desire to look into. 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. And indeed the method of God's dealing with any rational creature is a common concern to all; and it is for the honour of God's government to be vindicated in the sight of every intelligent being, *that he may be justified in his saying, and overcome when he is judged.*

If this be so, it must necessarily follow, that the redemption by Christ, though it relates immediately to men, must be agreeable to all the reason and relation of things, known or discoverable by the highest intellectual beings; and need I add, that there are many such not discoverable by us?

It is certain that we are but a small part of the intellectual world: what relation we bear to the other parts, or to the whole, we know not; and yet undoubtedly the common Governor of the whole must in his dealings with every part have regard to this common relation, whether we understand it or no. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, *that Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.* Angels sinned, and men sinned; men only are redeemed. If God is just, there must be a reason for this, though not within our reach at present; and, when we come to know it, perhaps we may be no longer at a loss to know that the sacrifice of Christ was necessary to the salvation of men.

That there are many orders of beings superior to man, is a proposition so agreeable to reason, that there is little room to doubt of it. All these orders are in Scripture comprehended under the general name of angel. What relation these beings stand in to us in many respects, I will not now inquire: but that they are not unconcerned spectators in the work of our redemption, is evident. Our Saviour tells us, *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth* (Luke, xv. 10.); again; *he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels.* Rev. iii. 5. Here the angels are mentioned as witnesses of the justice of the judgment, and not mere-

ly as attendants to make up the pomp and ceremony of judicature.

Since then the justice and equity of God in redeeming men are things which the angels desire and are concerned to look into: it is evident, that his justice and equity, and the reasons of providence in this great affair, may be discernible to the highest order of intellectual beings, though not discoverable by us, the lowest.

That this is probably the case, may be learnt from hence; that, where the Gospel has revealed to us any of these relations, not discoverable by human reason, so far we can see the reason and propriety of this great work of our redemption.

But let us consider how well these principles and doctrines of the Gospel agree together, and how naturally the one flows from the other. When we view the sad condition of mankind, the sin, folly, and misery, which are in the world; and then turn to contemplate the perfections, the wisdom, and the goodness of him who made us; nature raises some hopes in us that this confusion will some day find a remedy, and ourselves a release, from the goodness and wisdom of him who formed us. I blame not these hopes; they are just, they are natural. But, if nature had the knowledge of the Son of God, and could discover that the world was made and is upheld by his power, that we are his immediate creatures and subjects; would it not be altogether as natural to found some hopes upon this relation? Should we not be willing to believe, that this great person who made us, would have some compassion upon the work of his own hands? Should we not hope to find in him at least an intercessor on our behalf, an advocate with the father? Should we not be inclined to recommend to him all our pleas, to put all our interest into his hands, trusting that he could not want bowels of affection towards the creatures whom he formed after his own image and likeness? I think this would be but natural; and what more does the Gospel require of us? It has discovered to us this relation between Christ and the world, between Christ and the church, and requires from us such hope and faith, and such obedience as naturally flow from this relation: and could it

possibly require less? Would it not be absurd to tell us, that Christ is Lord of the world that is, and of that which is to come, and not to require us to have hope and confidence in him? Would it not be absurd to tell us, that he is the Lord of life and glory, and to bid us expect life and glory through any other hands than his? Would it not be absurd to tell us, that all judgment is committed to the Son, and yet no obedience due to him? or that God has appointed him to be head over all, and yet no honour to be paid him?

From these and the like considerations we may discern, how reasonable, how natural the religion of the Gospel is. It has indeed opened to us a new scene of things, discovering to us the ever-blessed Son of God, the Creator and Governor of the world: what else it proposes to us results naturally from this relation between Christ and the world. The mysterious work of our redemption itself seems to have arisen from the original relation between the only Son of God, and man the creature of God; and our Christian faith, in every article and branch of it, has a just foundation and support, in the power, authority, and pre-eminence of the Son of God. We well may believe he has redeemed us, since we know he made us. And, though all nature seems to frown on us, and to threaten death and destruction, from which no human power or cunning can deliver us; yet our hope is steadfast and unmoveable, being placed in him who is *able to subdue all things to himself*.

This belief, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and arise to life, is the fundamental article of a Christian's faith: if this be not well established, our hope and confidence are vain, and the preaching the cross of Christ is foolishness.

Let us reflect a little how our case stands with respect to the prospect beyond the grave: let us consider what hopes nature furnishes, and how they are supported, confirmed, and enlarged, by the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

When we view the world in its present circumstances, and see the misery and oppression that are in it; when we consider that the distresses and sorrows aris-

ing from the weakness and the wickedness of men are in number and in weight ten times more than all the sufferings to which we are exposed by the mere frailty of our condition ; we can hardly imagine that a wise and just God made the world to be what we find it is. When we look farther, and find that the best men oftentimes fare worst ; that even the desire and endeavour to please God frequently exposes them to infinite sorrows in this world ; we stand amazed, and are ready to doubt whether these appearances can be reconciled with the belief that God governs the world. But, since all nature proclaims the being and power of God, and the visible things of the creation declare in every language of the world the wisdom and goodness of him who made them ; under the force and conviction of this evidence that there is a God, we can find no possible way to account for his justice and goodness towards the children of men, but by supposing that *he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness* : and since this world is not evidently the scene of this judgment, we conclude there must be another, in which we shall stand before his tribunal. Thus far nature goes : all beyond this is vain philosophy and imagination, founded in conceits which are in vogue to-day and forgot to-morrow. Scholars may reason of the nature of the soul, and the condition of it when separated from the body ; but the common hopes of nature receive no support from such inquiries. But yet something farther seems necessary to give ease to nature in this painful search after life and happiness. The numberless instances of mortality which we hear and see, the remains of those who left the world ages before we came into it, and are still mouldering in their tombs, is undeniable evidence that death destroys this compound being which we call man. How to revive this union nature knows not ; and as for those who make the spirits of men in the divided state to be perfect men, they seem to have got a conclusion without consulting the premises.

Look now into the Gospel ; there you will find every reasonable hope of nature, nay, every reasonable suspicion of nature cleared up and confirmed, every difficulty

answered and removed. Do the present circumstances of the world lead you to suspect that God could never be author of such corrupt and wretched creatures as men now are ; Your suspicions are just and well founded : God made man upright, but through the temptation of the devil sin entered, and death and destruction followed after.

Do you suspect, from the success of virtue and vice in this world, that the providence of God does not interpose to protect the righteous from violence, or to punish the wicked ? The suspicion is not without ground. God leaves his best servants here to be tried oftentimes with affliction and sorrow, and permits the wicked to flourish and abound. The call of the Gospel is not to honour and riches here, but to take up our cross and follow Christ.

Do you judge, from comparing the present state of the world with the natural notion you have of God, and of his justice and goodness, that there must needs be another state in which justice shall take place ? You reason right : and the Gospel confirms the judgment. God has appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness : then those who mourn shall rejoice, those who weep shall laugh, and the persecuted and afflicted servants of God shall be heirs of his kingdom.

Have you sometimes misgivings of mind ? Are you tempted to mistrust this judgment, when you see the difficulties which surround it on every side ; some which affect the soul in its separate state, some which affect the body in its state of corruption and dissolution ? Look to the Gospel, there these difficulties are accounted for : and you need no longer puzzle yourself with dark questions concerning the state, condition, and nature of separate spirits, or concerning the body, however to appearance lost and destroyed ; for the body and soul shall once more meet to part no more, but to be happy for ever. In this case the learned cannot doubt, and the ignorant may be sure, that it is the man, the very man himself, who shall rise again : for an union of the same soul and body is as certainly the restoration of the man, as the dividing them was the destruction.

Would you know who it is that gives

this assurance? It is one who is able to make good his word; one who loved you so well as to die for you; yet one too great to be held a prisoner in the grave: no, he rose with triumph and glory, the first-born from the dead, and will in like manner call from the dust of the earth, all those who put their trust and confidence in him.

But who is this, you will say, who was subject to death, and yet had power over death? How could so much weakness and so much strength meet together? That God has the power of life, we know; but then he cannot die: that man is mortal, we know; but then he cannot give life.

Consider; does this difficulty deserve an answer, or does it not? Our Blessed Saviour lived among us in a low and poor condition, exposed to much ill-treatment from his jealous countrymen: when he fell into their power, their rage knew no bounds: they reviled him, insulted him, mocked him, scourged him, and at last nailed him to a cross, where by a shameful and wretched death he finished a life of sorrow and affliction.

Did we know no more of him than this, upon what ground could we pretend to hope that he will be able to save us from the power of death? We might say with the disciples, *We trusted this had been he who should have saved Israel*; but he is dead, he is gone, and all our hopes are buried in his grave.

If you think this ought to be answered, and that the faith of a Christian cannot be a reasonable faith, unless it be enabled to account for this seeming contradiction, I beseech you then never more complain of the Gospel for furnishing an answer to this great objection, for removing this stumbling-block out of the way of our faith. He was a man, and therefore he died: he was the Son of God, and therefore he rose from the dead, and will give life to all his true disciples. He it was who formed this world and all things in it, and for the sake of man was content to become man, and to taste death for all, that all through him may live. This is a wonderful piece of knowledge which God has revealed to us in his Gospel; but he has not revealed it to raise our wonder, but to confirm and establish our faith in him to whom he hath committed all

power, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things.*

Had the Gospel required of us to expect from Christ the redemption of our souls and bodies, and given us no reason to think that Christ was endued with power equal to the work, we might justly have complained; and it would have been a standing reproach, that Christians believe they know not what. But to expect redemption from the Son of God, the resurrection of our bodies from the same hand which at first created and formed them, are rational and well-founded acts of faith; and it is the Christian's glory, that he *knows in whom he has believed.*

That the world was made by the Son of God, is a proposition with which reason has no fault to find: that he who made the world should have power to renew it to life again, is highly consonant to reason. All the mystery lies in this, that so high and great a person should condescend to become man, and subject to death, for the sake of mankind. But are we the fit persons to complain of this transcendent mysterious love? Or, does it become us to quarrel with the kindness of our blessed Lord towards us, only because it is greater than we can conceive? No; it becomes us to bless and to adore this exceeding love, by which we are saved from condemnation, by which we expect to be rescued from death; knowing that the power of our Blessed Lord is equal to his love, and that he is *able to subdue all things to himself.*

SERMON XV.

On the Sufferings of Christ.

ISAIAH, lii. 3.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

WHEN our Lord was led away to be crucified, and the women bewailed and lamented his misery, he turned about to them, and said, *daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves.* Words, which we may very properly apply to ourselves for the direction of our devotion on this day* of his crucifixion;

* Good Friday.

a day it is of sorrow and mourning, but not for his sake, who, crowned with glory and honour, is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; but for our own, whose sins brought down this load of woe and misery upon our Blessed Redeemer. If we consider with how unbounded a love he embraced us in our lowest state of weakness, and with how cool an affection we approach to him ; how much he gladly endured upon our account, and how unwillingly we suffer any thing upon his ; if we reflect how earnestly he laboured to save our souls, and how carelessly and wantonly we throw them away ; what pains and sorrows he underwent to perfect our redemption, and to what empty pleasures we sacrifice all his sufferings, and our own eternal happiness ; it will shew us where the true cause of our grief lies, and how vainly we compliment our Lord, by venting our indignation against his ancient crucifiers, which ought to be spent upon ourselves, who are daily renewing his shame, and *crucifying him afresh*.

Whilst therefore I represent unto you this scene of woe, and endeavour to place before you *this man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief*, let every Christian heart supply this necessary admonition, all this he suffered for my sake ; then cast one look upon yourselves, and see how you have deserved all this love ; this will teach you how to divide your affections, to admire and adore the unbounded goodness of your Redeemer, and to lament and weep only for yourselves.

Many prophecies there are relating to our Lord, which regard only some particular circumstances of his life ; but this in the text points at no single calamity that befel him, but is a general description of his condition during his abode on earth : it begins at his cradle, and ends with his cross, pursuing him in every step, and discovers to us the Son of God through the darkest vale of sorrow and affliction.

Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world : in wisdom he ordained them all, and in mercy he has revealed some of them to the children of men. How gracious was it in him to forewarn the world by the spirit of prophecy of the mean appearance of their

Redeemer, that their faith might be armed against the reproach and contempt which attended his poverty, and the great scandal of his cross ! In human reckoning a mean condition bespeaks a mean man ; but here the case is otherwise : for, when God has foretold the mean appearance of his Son, his poverty became a proof of his authority, and the lowliness of his condition shewed the excellency of his person. He was *a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief* ; and had he not been so, we could never have believed him to be that glorious Redeemer, who, as the spirit of prophecy foretold, should be *despised and rejected of men*. The consideration, therefore, of our Saviour's sufferings, is not only an argument to inflame our love, but to strengthen our faith likewise ; shewing as well that he is our Redeemer, as how much he underwent for the sake of our redemption.

There are three things, then, which may deserve your attention in this subject :

I. The wisdom and goodness of God in determining to send his Son into the world in a state of poverty and affliction.

II. The evidence of prophecy, that he should so appear in the fullness of time.

III. The historical evidence, that he did so appear, and that in him the prophecies had their completion.

I. The wisdom and goodness of God in determining to send his Son into the world in a state of poverty and affliction.

The sufferings of Christ we find often insisted on by the sacred writers, as an evidence of the mercy of God towards mankind. Thus St. Paul, *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?* And again, *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*. So likewise St. John, *hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. This indeed was a great demonstration of his love ; for, as our blessed Lord himself hath told us, *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*. Were it then ever so hard to render an account of Christ's sufferings to the inquisitive, to the reasoners of this world ;

yet, since it is plain his sufferings were upon our account, if we consider them as an argument of God's goodness, and our Redeemer's love to us, it stands clear of all difficulties whatever, and plainly speaks how much our salvation was the care of Heaven. Perhaps we cannot see the reasons that made it necessary for Christ to die, that the world might live: but this we certainly know, that, if Christ died that the world might live, he had an exceeding great tenderness for the world, and we are bound to him in the strictest bonds of gratitude and love. And, since this scene lies so open to our view, it shews great perverseness of mind, and a base ungenerous disposition, to shut our eyes upon it, and to harden our hearts against the impressions of so much kindness, and to amuse ourselves with curious inquiries into the hidden reason of this mysterious love. What is it that your Lord requires of you, but to love and to obey him? What greater inducement can you have to both than this, that he first loved you, and laid down his life for you? Could you give ten thousand reasons for the expediency of his so doing, yet still your love and your obedience would stand upon the same bottom, that Christ died, that you might live. What purpose then of religion would it serve to know these hidden things of God? Knowledge will save no man! And who would not chuse rather to be found in the number of the most ignorant lovers of Christ, and of his word, than among the profoundest inquirers into the secret mysteries of Providence? Would you see the goodness of God? Nothing plainer, Christ died for you. Would you encourage yourself in the practice of virtue by the expectation of God's assistance and favour? Or, would you comfort yourself in your repentance, and be glad to know that God will receive you, if you return from the evil of your ways? Go, learn to reason of St. Paul: *if God spare not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Thus far then, that is, as far as we are concerned to go, our knowledge is clear and distinct, and the sufferings of Christ afford us such an argument for love and

obedience, as the weakest man must understand, and the wisest must adore.

But farther: though we cannot enter into the hidden wisdom of God, and see the reasons which made it necessary for Christ to suffer; yet if we consider his sufferings with respect to ourselves, we may discern many wise ends of Providence in this dispensation.

1. With regard to his being a teacher, his sufferings set him above the reach of suspicions. What ends could he have to serve by his doctrine, who met with nothing but misery and affliction, as the reward of his labour? Religions, we know, have been instituted to serve the ends of policy, and new kingdoms have sprung out of new doctrines: thus the empire and alcoran of Mahomet have the same date. But what room is there for these jealousies with respect to the Christian religion? What advantage did Christ or his followers make of the Gospel? The master lived in poverty, and the disciples in distress; he ended his life upon the cross, they theirs by sundry kinds of death. Nor was he disappointed in meeting with this usage: he knew before that it was ordained for him; and it was one great part of his business to prepare his disciples to follow his example, by acquainting them long before of the afflictions which both he and they were to endure. Some perhaps will suspect there was no wisdom in this; and all, I think, must own, that there was no worldly wisdom in it. Had our Lord come in the form of a temporal prince, surrounded with power and majesty, often had we heard before now of his cunning and his policy, and been told, that our religion was more nearly allied to this world than the other. But now the gospel stands clear of all these objections, from which perhaps nothing could have purged it but the blood of its Divine Author.

2. With regard to our Lord's being an example of holiness and obedience, set before us for our instruction and imitation. His sufferings render the pattern perfect, and shew his virtues in their truest lustre, and at the same time silence the pleas which laziness or self-love would otherwise have suggested. Had he lived in worldly prosperity, and

found all things easy about him, let his virtues have been ever so conspicuous, his example would have been extended but a little way. Perhaps poor men, and unfortunate, would have upbraided the rich and prosperous for not following the copy set before them; but they would have thought their own hard circumstances a sufficient excuse for not attempting it. But what pretence is there now left for any mortal? Are you more wretched than your master? Are you poor, and therefore discontented? Look to him, who had not where to lay his head, and yet was easy, and paid a cheerful obedience to his God. Are you provoked by ill usage to forget the peaceful duties of charity? Are you hurried to revenge by uncommon injuries? And can you at the same time think yourself a disciple of the blessed Jesus, who even upon the cross, and under the bitter agonies of death, prayed for his persecutors; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

3. With regard to his divine mission. His sufferings were an evident token that the hand of God was with him. He only can produce strength out of weakness, and knows how to confound the mighty things of the world by things which are of no account. Power, we know, especially if attended with happy incidents, can produce great things; but a weak poor man is so easily oppressed, that this before us is perhaps the only instance in which a whole nation ever rose to suppress one. And what was it that enabled him to withstand the rage of the people, and the malice of the priests, supported by the power of the government? When his life was sought, he was hid in the midst of the crowd, and was covered with darkness at noon-day: but, when his time was come, he fell an easy victim: but his death, like Sampson's, was more victorious than his life; in this only it differed, Sampson by his death destroyed his enemies, but the enemies of Christ were by his death redeemed.

Add to this, the evidence of prophecy, which is so much the stronger, by how much the weaker Christ was: so admirably has the wisdom of God displayed itself in this mystery of faith. Had the prophets foretold that a great man should

do great things; whenever that great man had come, it might have been doubted whether he was the person foretold, and whether his mighty deeds were not the common effects of such might and power as he was armed with: but when the prophets declared that all they foretold should be accomplished by a mean and wretched man, oppressed with sorrow, and worn out with grief; this was a case that could not be mistaken, hardly two such men could come; and whenever he came, he would be easily distinguished by the greatness of his works, and the meanness of his condition. And this leads me to consider,

II. The evidence of prophecy concerning the mean appearance our Lord was to make.

I shall not need to carry you far in search of this evidence; the chapter of the text alone is so full a description of this part of our Saviour's character, that it looks more like an history than a prophecy, and may with more reason be suspected to be a copy drawn from his life, than not to be a description of it. Yet this Scripture was in being long before our Lord was born, was in the keeping of his enemies, of those who hated and despised him, and at last put him to a cruel death, and were at once the preservers and the fulfillers of this prophecy. Here you find him represented as void of form and of comeliness; as having no beauty that we should desire him; one despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; from whom we hid as it were our faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Yet this is he, of whom before the Prophet had prophesied: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.* What enigmas are these? Shall he be a mighty prince, and yet despised and rejected of men? Shall he be encompassed with the glories of David's throne, and yet be

void of form and of comeliness? Shall he reign for ever, and establish justice and judgment for evermore, and shall he yet be taken from prison, and cut off from the land of the living? Where can these contradictions meet, and in what manner of person can they be reconciled? But to go on: After this general description of his low estate, the Prophet proceeds to point out some of the most remarkable calamities of his life. He was not only despised and rejected, but he *was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of the people he was stricken.* And yet, *he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.* Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief. *His soul was an offering for sin.* And yet, after this, when the Prophet had killed and buried him, he adds, *he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities.* Where are we now? Must he die a wretched death, and be numbered with the transgressors; and yet shall he prolong his days, and see the work of the Lord prosper in his hands? How shall we clear these things? Look into the Gospel, and there you will find the scene opening apace: there you will find your Lord despised and rejected of men, persecuted and afflicted, and put to a cruel death and open shame, and yet rising to glory and honour. There you may see this prisoner of the grave ascending to the glory of his Father, giving gifts unto men, and leading captivity captive.

Let us then, in the last place, consider the historical evidence we have for the completion of these prophecies, which describe the calamitous condition of our blessed Redeemer.

The way was prepared before he was born. His conception led to it; since the meanness of his parentage could promise nothing for the child but labour and sorrow: and so it proved. This mighty Prince of Peace made his first appearance in a manger; and we may well suppose

the other conveniencies he met, upon his first coming into the world, were answerable to this. No sooner was he born, but his life was sought after: the distressed parents fly their country, and the child is carried into banishment, before he knew to distinguish between good and evil. His youth was spent in the difficulties of poverty, and his hands employed in the works of it; and when the time came that he was to be made known unto Israel, and stood forth in the power of the Lord, confirming his doctrine with mighty signs and wonders, the opposition to him increased, and every act of charity he did to others brought new sorrow and misery to himself. During this time, in which he went about doing good, *he had not*, as he himself has told us, *where to lay his head.* When he cast out devils, he was immediately charged to be in league with the prince of them. When he healed the sick of their infirmities, and forgave their sins, then he was a blasphemer, an encroacher upon the prerogative of God. When he restored the withered hand, and cured the lame or the blind on the Sabbath day, then he was no longer fit to live: these were such offences, as nothing but his death could expiate. Consider what he suffered, and he was the lowest of the sons of men: consider what he did, and he appears, as he truly was, to be the Son of God.

But still there remains behind the gloomiest scene of sorrow. When the powers of darkness prevailed, and the time of his being offered up drew near, all things conspired to make his death bitter and terrifying. In his life he had chosen twelve to be his constant companions, and they at least adhered to him, and willingly partook in his afflictions: but now one of these bosom friends conspires his ruin, and sells him for thirty pieces of silver. The rest, though they were guilty of no such baseness, yet proved no comfort in his distress.

As the danger drew near, our blessed Lord, who was in all things tempted like unto us, sin only excepted, felt the pangs of nature at the approach of death, and retired to prayer, the only support of an afflicted spirit. In this his grief he chose Peter and the sons of Zebedee to

be his companions, that they might watch with him in his sorrow: but even here they forsook him; and, insensible of their master's agony, fell asleep. They were soon awakened; but they awoke only to fly, and Christ was left alone. Peter followed, but it was afar off; and he only followed him to deny him. Thus betrayed, and thus forsaken, he is carried to judgment. When he is silent, he is reproached with sullenness: when he speaks, he is charged with blasphemy. Sometimes he is buffeted and spit on; by and by, in cruel sport, they pay him the mock honours of a prince, he is crowned with thorns, has a reed put into his hand, and in derision he is saluted, *King of the Jews*. And that nothing might be wanting to shew how vile and contemptible he was to the people, a question was put between him and a criminal, which should be released; and with one voice the people answered, *Release unto us Barabbas*. Thus was he abused and rejected of all men.

Follow him but one step farther, and you will find him hanging upon the cross between two common robbers, groaning under the bitterest agonies of death. Nor yet can all this misery create in the lookers on any pity or compassion. See how they shake their heads, and say, *come down from the cross, Son of God, come down, and we will believe thee*. But neither the pains of the cross, nor those pangs which drew from him that complaint, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, nor all the malice and scorn of the crucifiers, could make him one moment forget his love and tenderness towards them. You hear no complaint from him, no appeal made against them to a future judgment: instead of this, with his last breath he pleads their cause, excuses their weakness, and begs for their pardon; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

And here let us close this scene, and return to ourselves with this question, *What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?* Let us also answer for ourselves in the words of the Psalmist, *I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*. We have nothing to return but our love, and

obedience, and nothing else is required of us. *He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*; let us not call for them again by our iniquities: let them be buried for ever, but let us arise to a new life of righteousness in Christ Jesus, that *when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory*.

SERMON XVI.

On the Resurrection and last Judgment.

2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.

It is the privilege and distinguishing character of a rational being to be able to look forward into futurity, and to consider his actions, not only with respect to the present advantage or disadvantage arising from them, but to view them in their consequences through all the parts of time in which himself may possibly exist. If therefore we value the privilege of being reasonable creatures, the only way to preserve it, is to make use of it; and by extending our views into all the scenes of futurity, in which we ourselves must bear a part, to lay the foundation of solid and durable happiness.

By the exercise of this power of reason, the wisest among the Heathens discovered, that there was ground for men to have expectations beyond this life. They saw plainly that themselves, and all things that fell under their observation, were dependent beings on the will and power of him who formed them; and when they sought to find him, they were led, by a necessary chain of reasoning, to the acknowledgment of a supreme, independent, intelligent Being. They saw, in every part of the creation, evident marks of his power, wisdom, and goodness: they discerned that all the inanimate parts of the world acted perpetually in submission to the law of their creation: the sun and all the host of heaven were constant to their courses; and, in every other part, the powers of nature were duly and regularly exerted for the preservation of the present system: among men only

they found disorder and confusion. That they had reason was plain; that they were intended to live according to reason could not be doubted; and yet they saw virtue often distressed and abandoned to all the evils of life, vice triumphant, and the world every where subject to the violence of pride and ambition. How to account for this they knew not: this only they could observe, that man was endowed with a freedom in acting, which the other beings of the lower world wanted; and to this they rightly ascribed the disorders to be found in this part of the creation. But though this accounted for the growth of evil, yet it rendered no account of the justice or goodness of God in permitting vice oftentimes to reign here in glory, whilst virtue suffered in distress. Upon these considerations they concluded, that there must be another state after this, in which all the present inequalities in the administration of Providence should be set right, and every man receive according to his works.

This was, this is the ground of our natural expectation of a life after this. But upon this ground of truth many fables and stories were raised, by fear and superstition, and by the power of imagination: so that the general belief, though right in its foundation, yet in almost all the particulars of it was rendered ridiculous and absurd. Hence it is, that, among the writers of antiquity, we sometimes find wise men ridiculing the follies and superstitions of the people, and bad men always arguing from these follies against the very notion itself, and calling in question the reality of any future state.

Under these circumstances of the world, our blessed Lord appeared to bring to light life and immortality through the Gospel. Let us then consider how this fundamental article of religion now stands upon the foot of the Gospel revelation.

As to the principal point, there is no difference between the hopes conveyed to us in the Gospel, and the expectation built upon natural reason: for, as the wisest men thought there must be, so the Gospel assures there will be, *a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness; and render to every man according to his works.* Thus far then the

doctrine of the Gospel, and the dictates of natural reason, must stand or fall together. If this doctrine has had a larger and more extensive influence through the authority of the Gospel, than it could have had by the mere force of speculative reasoning, the world has received an advantage by the encouragement given to virtue, and the restraint laid upon vice by these means, which ought ever to be acknowledged with thankfulness.

But the Gospel has added to this doctrine, and communicated to us the knowledge of some circumstances, which were not discoverable but by the means of revelation: and they are principally these: that there shall be a resurrection of the body; that Christ shall be judge of the world; that the rewards and punishments in another life shall be in proportion to our behaviour in this.

I shall speak briefly to these particulars, and shew for what purpose they were revealed.

First, The resurrection of the body was revealed to give all men a plain and a sensible notion of their being subject to a future judgment. Death is the destruction of the man: and sure we are that the lifeless body is no man; and whatever notions some may have of the soul in its state of separate existence, yet a mere spirit is not a man; for man is made of soul and body: and therefore to bring the man into judgment to answer for his deeds, the soul and the body must be brought together again. This doctrine, established upon the authority of the Gospel, does not remove all prejudices of the case, when examined by the short and scanty notions we have of the powers of nature: but it effectually removes all difficulties that affect this belief, considered with respect to religion and morality. For the single point in which religion is concerned, is to know whether men shall be accountable hereafter for their actions here. Reason tells us they ought to be so; but a great difficulty arises from the dissolution of the man by death; a difficulty followed by endless speculations upon the nature of the soul, of its separate existence, of its guilt in this separate state, with respect to crimes committed in another, and in conjunction with the body, and by other difficulties

of the like kind. But take in the declaration of Gospel, that soul and body shall be as certainly united at the resurrection as they were divided by death, and every man be himself again; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving that men may be judged for their iniquities hereafter, than there is in conceiving that they may be judged here, when they offend against the laws of the country.

But still there are prejudices remaining: to some it is incredible that the dead should be raised. To these we answer, upon the foot of the Gospel evidence, that the dead have been raised; upon the foot of reason, that it is altogether as credible, that God should be able to raise the dead to life a second time, as that he was able to give them life at first. There is no difference in the cases; they are acts of one and the very same power.

But we are further asked, what body shall be raised, since no man has exactly the same body two days together? new parts are perpetually added by nutrition, old ones carried off by perspiration; so that in the compass of a few years an human body may be almost totally altered, and be no more the same, than a ship which has been so often repaired, that no part of the original materials is left. But this objection, as plausible as it may seem, has nothing to do in the present case; for religion is concerned only to preserve the identity or sameness of the person, as the object of future judgment; and has nothing to do with that kind of identity against which the objection can be supposed to have any force. Were the case otherwise, the difficulty would be really as great in human judgments in this life, as in the divine judgment hereafter. Suppose a man should commit murder when he was twenty, and not be discovered till he was sixty, and then brought to trial; would common sense admit him to plead that he was not the same person who committed the fact; and to allege, in proof of it, the alterations in his body for the last forty years? Suppose then, that instead of being discovered at sixty, he should die at sixty; and should rise either with the body he had at sixty, or twenty, or in any intermediate time, would not the cause be just the same with respect to the future

judgment? Evidently it would be the same: which shews that the article of the resurrection, as far as it is a support of religion, and of a future judgment, stands quite clear of this difficulty.

But the prejudices which affect men most, when they consider this article of the resurrection, arise from the *weakest* of all imaginations, that they can judge from the settled laws and course of nature, what is or is not possible to the power of God. It is very true, that all our powers are bounded by the laws of nature; but does it follow that his power must be so bounded, who appointed these laws of nature, and could have appointed others, if he had thought proper? We cannot raise a dead body; our hands are tied up by the laws of nature, which we cannot surpass. Neither can we make or create a new man; but we certainly know, from reason and experience, that there is one who can: and what can induce us to suppose, that he cannot give life to a body a second time, who we certainly know gave life to it at first? These prejudices therefore we may safely refer to the power of the Almighty, to which all nature is obedient, and upon which we may securely depend for the performance of divine promises, how unpromising soever the circumstances may seem to be which attend them. When the Sadducees denied the resurrection, our Saviour told them, *I do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*: intimating plainly, that for the security and certainty of our resurrection we must trust to Scripture, and the declaration of God's purpose contained therein; and for the method and means of bringing this great work to pass we must rely on the power of God.

But whatever difficulties of this kind may remain, yet this article has removed all which lie in the way of our considering ourselves as accountable creatures, and subject to the future judgment of God. Whatever you may imagine to be the state of separate souls; whatever difficulties may arise in considering a mere spirit as accountable for the actions of this compound being, man; they are all out of the question. It is not a mere spirit, but the man himself, who is to be brought to judgment; and plain sense

must see and acknowledge the reasonableness of judging a man hereafter for the crimes committed in this life, as evidently as it sees the reasonableness of judging him here, when his crimes happen to be detected. So that the revelation in this particular has brought faith and common sense to a perfect agreement.

Secondly, The Gospel revelation has made known to us, that Christ shall be judge of the world.

Our Saviour tells us, that *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* John v. 22. And again: *The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment; because he is the Son of Man,* ver. 27. And St. Peter declares, that the apostles had it expressly in their commission to publish this doctrine to all the world: *He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead,* Acts, x. 42. Accordingly St. Paul, in his short discourse to the men of Athens, fully instructed them in this material point: *God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Acts, xvii. 31. I will not multiply texts to this purpose, though many more there are which speak the same sense, because this doctrine is very well known to Christians, and is part of the creed which we daily rehearse.

But it is material to observe, that this authority is given to Christ, *because he is the Son of Man*, as he himself has assured us; and that the person ordained to be judge is a man, *even the man whom God raised from the dead*, as St. Paul asserts. How happy is it for us to have a judge, I had almost said so partial, but I may well say so favourable to us, that he was content to be himself the sacrifice to redeem us from the punishment due to our sins? When we consider ourselves, how wretched and weak we are, how perpetually doing wrong, either wilfully or ignorantly, and contemplate the infinite majesty, holiness, and justice of God, what account can we hope to give of ourselves to him, whose eyes are

purser than to behold iniquity? But see, God hath withdrawn his terrors, and has given a man to be the judge of men. So that we may say of our judge what the Apostle to the Hebrews says of our high priest, *We have not a judge which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are; yet without sin.*

You may think perhaps that this is drawing consequences upon the foot of vulgar apprehensions, and that in reality there is no difference, whether God be judge himself, or commits the judgment to the Son of Man: for, since Christ shall come not only in the power, but in the wisdom and the justice of God also to judge the world, what difference can there be in the judgment, since in both cases it must be guided and formed by the wisdom and justice of God? True it is, that a mere man is not qualified to be judge of the world; the knowledge of hearts is necessary to the right discharge of that office; a knowledge which no mere man was ever endowed with. But still, if the man is to be judge, the sentiments, notions, and feeling of the man, however guided and influenced by superior wisdom, must preside over and govern the whole action; otherwise the man will not be judge. And hence we may answer some difficulties which speculative men have brought into the subject of a future judgment. Some have imagined that justice, mercy, and goodness in God, are not of the same kind with justice, mercy, and goodness in men; and therefore that we can never, from our notions of these qualities in man, argue consequentially to the attributes of God, or to the acts flowing from these attributes. The result of which is, that when we talk of God's justice or mercy in judging the world, we talk of something which we do not understand. But if men would consult Scripture, these difficulties would not meet them in their way; for surely we know what justice, mercy, and goodness, mean among men; and since the Scripture assures us, that the man whom God raised from the dead is ordained Judge of the world, we may be very certain that the justice, mercy, and goodness, to be displayed in the future judgment, will be such as all

men have a common sense and apprehension of; unless you can imagine that a new rule is to be introduced, to which the Judge, and those to be judged, are equally strangers. Upon this foot of Scripture then we may certainly know, what the justice, mercy, and goodness, are by which we must finally stand or fall; and this point being secured, the speculation may be left to shift for itself.

And thus you see how this great and fundamental article of religion, involved in darkness in former ages, is made plain and sensible to mankind by the light of the Gospel. That men were accountable, they always knew; that there would be a future judgment, was generally believed; but how men were to appear in judgment, or how mere unbodied spirits were to be judged, how rewarded, or how punished, they knew not. That the right of judging men was in God, was well known; but how he would exercise it, whether by himself or another, visible or invisibly, they knew not. Infinite were the disputes upon this subject: instead of which the Gospel has given a plain sensible representation, assuring us that at the judgment we shall be, what we now are, men, real men; and that the man Christ Jesus, who appeared in the world to redeem us, will appear again to judge us by that very Gospel, and those very rules, which he has left us to govern and conduct ourselves by.

Thirdly, Let us then go one step farther, and view the consequences of this judgment; this solemn judgment, which every mortal must undergo. If we consult either Scripture or reason, we shall find no evidence of any farther change to be made in our future state, after once judgment has passed on us. That we are accountable, and shall therefore be judged, reason says; but can see nothing relating to us after judgment, except the reward or the punishment consequent upon it: and therefore the only conclusion to be drawn from this information is, that the condition of man will be finally determined as to happiness or misery, and consequently that man must continue under the good or the bad effects of the last judgment.

As reason can shew us nothing beyond

judgment, but that state and condition which are the effect of it; so the Holy Scripture has given us reason to think that nothing else there shall be, by describing the rewards and punishments of another life, as having perpetual duration. Life eternal is prepared for the righteous, and everlasting punishment for the wicked. The fire prepared to receive them is never to go out; the worm prepared to torment them will never die. These images carry great terror with them, and have led some to a milder interpretation of the threats of Scripture, than the language of it seems to import. But even the mildest interpretation, that allows any meaning at all to those threats, supposes the punishment to last as long as the sinner lasts. So that in this, the lowest view, our all depends upon the judgment which shall be finally passed on us at the second coming of our Lord. There is then a justness of thought, as well as great charity to the souls of men, in what the Apostle adds, *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*. If the Christian revelation has cleared our doubts, by bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel; if it has given us ground for hope and confidence by assuring us that we shall be judged by him, who so loved us that he gave himself for us, and submitted to die that we might live; it has also given us ground to be watchful and careful over ourselves, and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. For it is a fearful thing to be to answer for ourselves before the Searcher of all hearts: to answer to him who loved us, for despising the love he shewed us; to answer to him who died for us, for having crucified him afresh, and put him to open shame; and for having accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. This will be the sad case of every wilful sinner. The view of this misery and distress, which sinners are calling upon themselves by their iniquity, moved the Apostle, and must ever move those who succeed to his office, to warn men *to flee from the wrath that is to come*. We know the *terror of the Lord*, and therefore *persuade men*. Happy would it be if men, knowing and considering these terrors,

would suffer themselves to be persuaded. Which God grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

On Belief in Christ.

By BISHOP HORSLEY.

JOHN, XX. 29.

Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.

THESE were the words of Christ's reply to his apostle Thomas, when he, who had refused to credit the resurrection of Jesus upon the report of the other apostles, received the conviction of his own senses in a personal interview, and recognised our Saviour for Lord and God.

What is most remarkable in these words, on the first general view of them, in the great coolness with which our Lord accepts an act of homage and adoration offered with much warmth and cordiality ; a circumstance which plainly indicates some defect or blemish in the offering, by which its value was much diminished. And this could be nothing but the lateness of it—the apostle's wonderful reluctance to believe much less than what he at last professes : But eight days since, he would not believe that Jesus to be alive whom now he worships as the living God.

But this is not all : The apostle is not only reprov'd for his past incredulity ; he is told besides, at least it is indirectly suggested to him, that the belief which he at last so fervently professes hath little merit in it,—that it was not of that sort of faith which might claim the promises of the gospel ; being indeed no voluntary act of his own mind, but the necessary result of irresistible evidence. This is clearly implied in that blessing which our Lord so emphatically pronounces on those who not having seen should yet believe. " Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : " You now

indeed believe, when the testimony of your own senses leaves it no longer in your power to disbelieve. I promise no blessing to such reluctant faith : " Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."

Here arise two questions, which, either for the difficulty which each carries in the first face of it, or for the instruction which the speculation may afford, may well deserve an accurate discussion. The first is, why Thomas was reprov'd for not believing till he was convinced ? the second, what should be the peculiar merit of that faith which hath not the immediate evidence of sense for its foundation or support, that our Saviour should on this sort of faith exclusively pronounce a blessing ? A readiness to believe wonders upon slender evidence hath ever been deemed a certain mark of a weak mind ; and it may justly seem impossible that man should earn a blessing by his folly, or incur God's displeasure by his discretion.

For the clearing up of these difficult questions, this shall be my method,—First, to consider what ground there might be for St. Thomas to believe the fact of our Lord's resurrection upon the report of the other ten apostles, before he had himself seen him ; and from what motives it may be supposed that he withheld his assent. In the course of this inquiry, it will appear that an evidence very different from ocular demonstration may in many cases command the assent of a reasonable man ; and that no man can be justified in setting a resolution within himself, as Thomas did, that he will not believe without this or that particular kind of proof. Secondly, I shall show that the belief of any thing upon such evidence as Thomas at last had of Christ's resurrection is a natural act of the human mind, to which nothing of moral or religious merit can reasonably be ascribed. These preliminary disquisitions will furnish the necessary principles for the resolution of that great and interesting question, What is the merit, and at the same time what is the certainty, of that faith which believes what it hath not seen ?

In the first place, I propose to consider what ground there might be for Thomas

to believe the fact of our Saviour's resurrection, upon the testimony of the other apostles, before he had himself seen him; and what may be supposed to have been the motives upon which he refused his assent. And here the thing principally to be considered is, what degree of trust the apostle might reasonably have placed in our Lord's promise of rising again after the event of his crucifixion; and what there might be on the other hand to outweigh the expectation of the thing, and the positive testimony of his fellow disciples. Our Saviour had on many occasions foretold his own death; and never without assurances that he would rise again on the third day. This he generally declared enigmatically to the Jews, but in the most explicit terms to the apostles in private: And it is very remarkable, that though he had spoken of nothing more plainly in private or more darkly in public than of his resurrection, describing it under the figure of rebuilding a demolished temple, and under allusions to the prophet Jonah's miraculous deliverance,—yet the Jews, whose understandings had been blind to the meaning of the easiest parables, took the full meaning of these figured predictions; while the apostles either understood them not, or retained not in their memory the plain unequivocal declarations which our Lord had made to them; so that while the rulers of the Jews were using all precaution to prevent the success of a counterfeit resurrection, nothing could be more remote from the expectations of the apostles than a real one. In this we see the hand of Providence wonderfully directing all things for the conviction of after ages. Had the caution of the Jews been less or the faith of the apostles more awake, the evidence of this glorious truth, that "Christ is risen, and become the first-fruits of them that slept," might not have been to us what it now is. Nevertheless, though none of the apostles seem to have had positive expectations of our Lord's resurrection before it happened, yet St. Thomas seems to have been singular in treating the report of the resurrection as a manifest fiction.

From the conversation of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, it may be

gathered that the first report of the holy women, though it had not yet obtained belief, was by no means rejected with absolute contempt. On the contrary, it seems to have awakened in all but Thomas some recollection of our Lord's predictions, and some dubious solicitude what might be the events of the third day. And yet it cannot be supposed that St. Thomas at this time had no remembrance of our Lord's predictions of his resurrection; of which the other ten could not but remind him: But the consideration, it seems, had no weight with him. And yet the person who had given his followers these assurances was no ordinary man: His miraculous conception had been foretold by an angel; his birth had been announced to the peasants of Judea by a company of the heavenly host—to the learned of a distant country by a new wonder in the air; his high original had been afterwards attested by voices from heaven; he had displayed powers in himself which amounted to nothing less than an uncontrolled and unlimited dominion over every department of the universe,—over the first elements of which natural substances are composed, in his first miracle of changing water into wine, and in the later ones of augmenting the mass of a few loaves and a few small fishes to a quantity sufficient for the meal of hungry multitudes—over the most turbulent of the natural elements, composing the raging winds and troubled waves—over the laws of nature, exempting the matter of his body on a particular occasion from the general force of gravitation, and the power of mechanical impulse, so as to tread secure and firm upon the tossing surface of a stormy sea—over the vegetable kingdom, blasting the fig-tree with his word—over the animal body, removing its diseases, correcting the original defects and disorders of its organs, and restoring its mutilated parts—over the human mind, penetrating the closest secrets of each man's heart—over the revolted spirits, delivering miserable mortals from their persecution, and compelling them to confess him for their Lord and the destined avenger of their crimes; and, what might more than all add weight to the promise of his resurrection, he had shown that life itself was in his power,

restoring it in various instances—in one when it had been so long extinguished that the putrefaction of the animal fluids must have taken place.

These wonders had been performed to confirm the purest doctrine, and had been accompanied with the most unblemished life. This extraordinary personage had predicted his own death, the manner of it, and many of its circumstances; all which the apostle had seen exactly verified in the event. Even when he hung upon the cross in agonies—agonies of body, and stronger agonies of mind, which might more have shaken the faith of his disciples, Nature bore witness to her Lord in awful signs of sympathy; the sun, without any natural cause, withdrew his light; and in the moment that he yielded up the ghost, the earth shook and the rocks were rent.

From this series of wonders, to most of which he had been an eye-witness, had not St. Thomas more reason to expect the completion of Christ's prediction at the time appointed, than to shut his ears against the report of the other ten, of whose probity and veracity in the course of their attendance on their common Lord he must have had full experience? Cases may possibly arise, in which the intrinsic improbability of the thing averred may outweigh the most positive and unexceptionable evidence; and in which a wise man may be allowed to say, not, with Thomas, "I will not believe" (for a case can hardly be supposed in which testimony is to be of no weight), but he might say "I will doubt." But where ten men of fair character bear witness, each upon his own knowledge, to a fact which is in itself more probable than its opposite, I know not upon what ground their testimony can be questioned.

Such was the case before us. Where then can we look for the ground of the apostle's incredulity, but in the prejudices of his own mind? Possibly he might stand upon what he might term his right. Since each of the other ten had received the satisfaction of ocular demonstration, he might think he had a just pretence to expect and insist upon the same. He had been no less than they attached, he might say, to his Master's person—no

less an admirer of his doctrine—no less observant of his precepts—nor less a diligent though distant copier of his great example; not less than the rest he revered and loved his memory; he would not less rejoice to see him again alive; nor would he with less firmness and constancy, provided he might be indulged with the same evidence of the fact, bear witness to his resurrection, nor less cheerfully seal the glorious attestation with his blood: But for what reason could it be expected of him to believe, upon the testimony of the other ten, that for which each of them pretended to have received the immediate evidence of his own senses? He never would believe that his kind Master, who knew his attachment—whose affection he had so often experienced, if he were really alive, would deny the honour and satisfaction of a personal interview to himself alone of all his old adherents.

If these were the apostle's sentiments, he did not fairly weigh the evidence that was before him of the fact in question; but made his the condition of his believing it at all,—that it should be proved to him by evidence of one particular kind. Did he ask himself upon what evidence he and the Jews his contemporaries believed in the divine authority of the laws of Moses?—upon what evidence they received as oracular the writings of the ancient prophets?

A general revelation could never be, if no proof might be sufficient for a reasonable man but the immediate testimony of his own senses. The benefit of every revelation must in that case be confined to the few individuals to whom it should be first conveyed. The Mosaic institution could have been only for that perverse race which perished in the Wilderness through unbelief; and the preaching of the prophets, for those stubborn generations which refused to hearken, and underwent the judgments of God in their long captivity. These examples might have taught him that the advantage of ocular proof is no mark of God's partial favour for those to whom it may be granted. Were it not unreasonable to suppose that Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, and Daniel, who saw the promises of the Messiah only afar off.

were less in the favour of Heaven than they who lived in later times, when the promises began to take effect?

Religious truth itself, and the evidence of religious truth, is imparted, like all other blessings, in various measures and degrees, to different ages and different countries of the world, and to different individuals of the same country and of the same age. And of this no account is to be given, but that in which all good men will rest satisfied,—that “known unto God are all his ways,” and that “the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.” Every man therefore may be allowed to say that he will not believe without sufficient evidence; but none can without great presumption pretend to stipulate for any particular kind of proof, and refuse to attend to any other, if that which he may think he should like best should not be set before him. This is indeed the very spirit of infidelity; and this was the temper of those brethren of the rich man, in our Saviour’s parable, who hearkened not to Moses and the prophets, and yet were expected to repent if one should arise from the dead: This is the conduct of modern unbelievers, who examine not the evidence of revelation as it actually stands, but insist that that sort of proof should be generally exhibited which from the nature of the thing must always be confined to very few. The apostle Thomas, in the principles of his unbelief, too much resembled these uncandid reasoners. Yet let them not think to be sheltered under his example, unless they will follow it in the better part, by a recantation of their errors and a confession of the truth full and ingenuous as his, when once their hearts and understandings are convinced.

From this summary view of the evidence that St. Thomas might have found of our Lord’s resurrection, before it was confirmed to him by a personal interview, —and from this state of the principles upon which alone his incredulity could be founded,—it may sufficiently appear that the reproof he received was not unmerited; and we may see reason to admire and adore the affectionate mildness with which it was administered.

The same thing will still more appear, when it shall be shown, that in the belief

of any thing upon such evidence as was at last exhibited to Thomas of our Lord’s resurrection there can be no merit; and for this plain reason, that a belief resulting from such evidence is a necessary act of the understanding, in which the heart is totally uninterested. An assent to full and present proof, from whatever that proof may arise—whether from the senses, from historical evidence, or from the deductions of reason,—an assent, I say, to proof that is in itself complete and full, when the mind holds it in immediate contemplation and comprehends and masters it, arises as necessarily from the nature of the understanding as the perception of external objects arises from the structure of the organs to which they are adapted. To perceive truth by its proper evidence, is of the formal nature of the rational mind; as it is of the physical nature of the eye to see an object by the light that it reflects, or of the ear to hear the sounds which the air conveys to it. To discern the connection between a fact and its evidence, a proposition and its proof, is a faculty fixed in the nature of the mind by God; which faculty the mind is pretty much at liberty to employ or not, and hath a strange power of employing it in some instances perversely; but when it is employed aright—when proof is brought into the mind’s view, either by its own fair investigation or by the force of external objects striking the bodily organs, assent and conviction must ensue. The eye may be shut; the ear may be stopped! the understanding may turn itself away from unpleasing subjects: But the eye, when it is open, hath no power not to see; the ear, when open, hath no power not to hear; and the understanding hath no power not to know truth when the attention is turned to it. It matters not of what kind the proposition may be to which the understanding assents in consequence of full proof;—the completeness of the proof necessarily precludes the possibility of merit in the act of assenting. Now this was the case of Thomas, and indeed of all the apostles, —not with respect to the whole of their faith, but with respect to the particular fact of our Lord’s resurrection;—the proof they had of it was full and absolute: Jesus in his well-known person stands

alive before them ; and to believe, when they saw him alive, that he who had been dead was then living, could be nothing more meritorious than to believe that he was dead when they saw the body laid in the grave.

I desire not to be misunderstood. There may be much merit in the diligence, the candour, and sincerity with which a man inquires and investigates ;—there may be merit in the conduct he pursues in consequence of particular convictions. In the conduct of the apostles, there was much merit, under the conviction they at last attained of our Lord's resurrection—in their zeal to diffuse his doctrines—in their firmness in attesting his triumph over the grave, in defiance of the utmost rigour of persecution,—such merit as shall be rewarded with unfading crowns of glory : But in the mere act of believing a fact evidenced by the senses, or a proposition legitimately proved, of whatever kind, there can be none.

But here arises that most interesting question, Since there is confessedly no merit in that act of belief which is the result of ocular conviction, what is the merit of that faith which hath no such foundation—which “ believes that which it hath not seen,” that our Saviour should so emphatically pronounce it blessed ?

I trust that I shall evince, by God's assistance, that this blessing to the faithful standeth sure. But this great subject may well demand a separate discourse.

SERMON XVII.

By BISHOP HORSLEY. *

On Belief in Christ.

JOHN, XX. 29.

Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed ; Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.

THE propriety of the reproof addressed in these words to the apostle hath been already shown. It was not his fault that he did not believe before he was convinced ; but that he had hastily set a resolution of unbelief, without attending to a proof which, however inferior to the

evidence of sense, might have given him conviction.

It hath been shown besides, that a faith which is the result of the immediate testimony of the senses must be altogether destitute, as our Saviour intimates, of moral merit. Hence arises this interesting question, the last in my original division of the subject, which I now purpose to discuss,—Since there is no merit in believing upon ocular conviction, what is the merit of that faith which hath not that foundation ? Is it that it is taken up upon slighter grounds ? Is this possible in the nature of things, that the imperfection of the proof should enhance the merit of belief ? Will it not follow, if this principle be once admitted, that where there is the least of proof there will be the most of this merit ; and that the faith which is the most valuable in the sight of God is that which hath the least support and countenance from the understanding ?—a proposition which the adversaries of our holy religion would much rejoice that its professors should affirm.

To clear these difficulties, I know no readier way, than to inquire on what grounds their faith for the most part is likely to be built, who believe, as all Christians do who at this day believe the gospel, without the evidence of their senses. From this inquiry, I hope to make appear both the certainty and the merit of our faith,—its certainty, as resting on a foundation no less firm, though far less compulsive, than the evidence of sense itself ; its merit, as a mixed act of the understanding and of the will of the understanding, deducing its conclusions from the surest premises—of the will, submitting itself to the best of motives. Our faith therefore will appear to be an act in which the moral qualities of the mind are no less active than its reasoning faculties ; and upon this account, it may claim a moral merit of which the involuntary assent of understanding present to sense or to necessary proof must ever be divested.

What then is the ground upon which the faith of the generality of Christians in the present ages is built, who all believe what they have not seen ?—I say, of the generality of Christians ; for what

ever it may be which gives faith its merit in the sight of God, it is surely to be looked for not in any thing peculiar to the faith of the learned, but in the common faith of the plain illiterate believer. What then is the ground of his conviction? Is it the historical evidence of the facts recorded in the gospels? Perhaps no facts of an equal antiquity may boast a historical evidence equally complete; and without some degree of this evidence there could be no faith: Yet it is but a branch of the proof, and, if I mistake not, far from the most considerable part; for the whole of this evidence lies open but to a small proportion of the Christian world: It is such as many true believers, many whose names are written in the book of life, have neither the leisure nor the light to scrutinize so as to receive from this alone a sufficient conviction: In the degree in which it may be supposed to strike the generality of believers, it seems to be that which may rather finish a proof begun in other principles than make by itself an entire demonstration.

What then is that which, in connexion with that portion of the historical evidence which common men may be supposed to perceive, affords to them a rational ground of conviction? Is it the completion of prophecy? This itself must have its proof from history. To those who live when the things predicted come to pass, the original delivery of the prophecy is a matter to be proved by historical evidence: To those who live after the things predicted are come to pass, both the delivery of the prophecy and the events in which it is supposed to be verified are points of history; and moreover, by the figured language of prophecy, the evidence which it affords is of all the most removed from popular apprehension. What then is the great foundation of proof to those who are little read in history, and are ill qualified to decypher prophecy, and compare it with the records of mankind? Plainly this, which the learned and the ignorant may equally comprehend,—the intrinsic excellence of the doctrine, and the purity of the precept;—a doctrine which conveys to the rudest understanding just and exalted notions of the Divine perfections; exacts a worship purged of

all hypocrisy and superstition—the most adapted to the nature of him who offers—the most worthy, if aught may be worthy, of the Being that accepts it; prescribes the most rational duties—things intrinsically the best, and the most conducive to private and to public good; proposes rewards adequate to the vast desires and capacities of the rational soul; promises mercy to infirmity, without indulgence to vice; holds out pardon to the penitent offender, in that particular way which secures to a frail imperfect race the blessings of a mild government, and secures to the majesty of the Universal Governor all the useful ends of punishment; and builds this scheme of redemption on a history of man and Providence—of man's original corruption, and the various interpositions of Providence for his gradual recovery, —which clears up many perplexing questions concerning the origin of evil, the unequal distribution of present happiness and misery, and the disadvantages on the side of virtue in this constitution of things, which seem inexplicable upon any other principles.

This excellence of the Christian doctrine considered in itself, as without it no external evidence of revelation could be sufficient, so it gives to those who are qualified to perceive it that internal probability to the whole scheme, that the external evidence, in that proportion of it in which it may be supposed to be understood by common men, may be well allowed to complete the proof. This, I am persuaded, is the consideration that chiefly weighs with those who are quite unable to collect and unite for themselves the scattered parts of that multifarious proof which history and prophecy afford.

I would not be understood to disparage the proof of revelation from historical evidence or from prophecy: When I speak of that part of it which lies within the reach of unlettered men as small, I speak of it with reference to its whole. I am satisfied, that whoever is qualified to take a view of but one half, or a much less proportion of the proof of that kind which is now extant in the world, will be overpowered with the force of it. Some there will always be who will profit by this proof, and will be curious to seek

after it; and mankind in general will be advantaged by their lights. But of those in any one age of the world who may be capable of receiving the full benefit of this proof, I question whether the number be greater than of those in the apostolic age who were in a situation to receive the benefit of ocular demonstration. And I would endeavour to ascertain what common ground of conviction there may be for all men, of which the ignorant and the learned may equally take advantage; and I took this inquiry, in order to discover wherein that merit of faith consists which may entitle to the blessing pronounced in the text and in various other parts of Scripture; for whatever that may be from which true faith derives the merit, we are undoubtedly to look for it not in any thing peculiar to the faith of the learned, but in the common faith of the plain illiterate believer. Now, the ground of his conviction, that which gives force and vigour to whatever else of the evidence may come within his view, is evidently his sense and consciousness of the excellence of the gospel doctrine. This is an evidence which is felt no doubt in its full force by many a man who can hold no argument about the nature of its certainty—with him who holds the plough or tends the loom, who hath never been sufficiently at leisure from the laborious occupations of necessitous life to speculate upon moral truth and beauty in the abstract; for a quick discernment and a truth of taste in religious subjects proceed not from that subtilty or refinement of the understanding by which men are qualified to figure in the arts of rhetoric and disputation, but from the moral qualities of the heart. A devout and honest mind refers the doctrines and precepts of religion to that exemplar of the good and the fair which it carries about within itself in its own feelings: By their agreement with thus, it understands their excellence: Understanding their excellence, it is disposed to embrace them and to obey them; and in this disposition listens with candour to the external evidence. It may seem, that by reducing faith to these feelings as its first principles, we resolve the grounds of our conviction into a previous disposition of the mind to

believe the thing propounded,—that is, it may be said, into a prejudice. But this is a mistake: I suppose no favour of the mind for the doctrine propounded but what is founded on a sense and perception of its purity and excellence,—none but what is the consequence of that perception, and in no degree the cause of it. We suppose no previous disposition of the mind, but a general sense and approbation of what is good; which is never called a prejudice but by those who have it not, and by a gross abuse of language. The sense and approbation of what is good is no infirmity, but the perfection of our nature. Of our nature, did I say?—the approbation of what is good, joined with the perfect understanding of it, is the perfection of the Divine.

The reason that the authority of these internal perceptions of moral truth and good is often called in question is this,—that from the great diversity that is found in the opinions of men, and the different judgments that they seem to pass upon the same things, it is too hastily inferred that these original perceptions in various men are various, and cannot therefore be to any the test of universal truth. A Christian, for example, imagines a natural impurity in sensual gratifications; a Mahometan is persuaded that they will make a part of the happiness of the righteous in a future state: The Christian reverences his Bible because it prohibits these indulgences; the Mahometan loves the Koran because it permits them. Whence, it is said, is this diversity of opinion, unless the mind of the Christian perceives those things as impure which the mind of the Mahometan equally perceives as innocent? From these equal but various perceptions they severally infer the probability of their various faiths; and who shall say that the one judges more reasonably than the other, if both judge from perceptions of which they are conscious? Yet they judge differently; both therefore cannot judge aright, unless right judgment may be different from itself. Must it not then be granted, either that these perceptions are uncertain and fallacious,—or, which may seem more reasonable, since no man can have a higher certainty than that which arises from a consciousness of his own feel-

ings, that every man hath his own private standard of moral truth and excellence, purity and turpitude; that right and wrong are nothing in themselves, but are to every man what his particular conscience makes them; and that the universal idea of moral beauty, of which some men have affected to be so vehemently enamoured, and which is set up as the ultimate test of truth in the highest speculations, is a mere fiction of the imagination?

It is not to be wondered that many have been carried away by the fair appearance of this argument, in which nothing seems to be alleged that is open to objection. Nevertheless, the conclusion is false, and the whole reasoning is nothing better than a cheat and a lie; the premises on which it is founded being a false fact, with much art tacitly taken for granted. The whole proceeds on this assumption,—that men, in forming their judgments of things, do always refer to the original perceptions of their own minds, that is, to conscience. Deny this, and the diversity of opinions will no longer be a proof of a diversity of original perceptions; from which supposed diversity the fallaciousness of that perception was inferred. And is not this to be denied? Is it not rather the truth, that no man is at all times attentive to these perceptions? that many men never attend to them at all? that in many they are stifled and overcome,—in some, by education, fashion, or example; in others, by the desperate wickedness of their own hearts? Now, the mind in which this ruin hath been effected hath lost indeed its natural criterion of truth; and judges not by its original feelings, but by opinions taken up at random. Nevertheless, the nature of things is not altered by the disorder of perverted minds; nor is the evidence of things the less to those who perceive them as they are, because there are those who have not that perception. No man the less clearly sees the light, whose own eye is sound, because it is not seen by another who is blind; nor are the distinctions of colour less to all mankind, because a disordered eye confounds them. The same reasoning may be applied to our mental perceptions: The Christian's discernment of the purity of the gospel

doctrine is not the less clear—his veneration for it arising from that discernment not the less rational, because a Mahometan may with equal ardour embrace a corrupt system, and may be insensible to the greater beauty of that which he rejects. In a word, every man implicitly trusts his bodily senses concerning external objects placed at a convenient distance; and every man may with as good a reason put even a greater trust in the perceptions of which he is conscious in his own mind; which indeed are nothing else than the first notices of truth and of Himself which the Father of Spirits imparts to subordinate minds, and which are to them the first principles and seeds of intellect.

I have been led into an abstruse disquisition; but I trust that I have shown, and in a manner that plain men may understand, that there is an infallible certainty in our natural sense of moral right and wrong, purity and turpitude; and that I have exposed the base sophistry of that ensnaring argument by which some men would persuade the contrary: Consequently, the internal probability of our most holy religion is justly inferred from the natural sense of the excellence of its doctrines; and a faith built on the view of that probability rests on the most solid foundation. The external evidence which is to complete the proof is much the same to every man at this day as the external evidence of the resurrection was to Thomas upon the report of the other ten apostles; with this difference,—that those wonderful facts of our Saviour's life which Thomas knew by ocular proof we receive from the testimony of others.

The credibility of this testimony it is not difficult for any one to estimate, who considers how improbable it is that the preachers of a righteous doctrine, a pure morality, a strict religion, should themselves be impostors,—how improbable that the apostles and first preachers could be deceived in things which passed before their eyes; and how much credit is naturally due to a number of well-informed men, of unimpeached character, attesting a thing to their own loss and at the hazard of their lives. This is the summary of the external evidence of Christianity as it may appear to men in general—to the

most illiterate who have had any thing of a Christian education. The general view of it, joined to the intrinsic probability of the doctrine, may reasonably work that determined conviction which may incline the illiterate believer to turn a deaf ear to objections which the learned only can be competent to examine; and to repose his mind in this persuasion,—that there is no objection to be brought, which if understood, would appear to him sufficient to outweigh the mass of evidence that is before him.

It is to be observed, that all the writers who have attacked the external evidence seem to have taken it for granted that the thing to be proved is in itself improbable. None, I believe, hath been so inconsiderate as to assert, that if the Christian scheme were probable in itself, the evidence we have of it, with all the difficulties they have been able to raise in it, would not be amply sufficient. That they do not perceive the intrinsic probability of Christianity,—those of them, I mean, who discover a due respect for natural religion,—that these do not perceive the intrinsic probability of the doctrines of our religion, I would not willingly impute to any moral depravity of heart: I will rather suppose that they have attended singly to the marvel of the story, and have never taken a near view of the beauty and perfection of the moral and theological system.

From this general state of the principles on which the faith of Christians in these ages may be supposed to rest, when none can have the conviction of ocular proof, it is not difficult to understand what is the peculiar merit of that faith which believes what it hath not seen, whereby it is entitled to our Saviour's blessing. The merit of this faith is not to be placed merely in its consequences, in its effects on the believer's life and actions. It is certain, that faith which hath not these effects is dead: There can be no sincere and salutary faith, where its natural fruit, a virtuous and holy life, is wanting. But faith, if I mistake not, hath, besides, another merit more properly its own, not acquired from its consequences, but conveyed to it from the principles in which it takes its rise. These indeed are what give to every action, much more

than its consequences, its proper character and denomination; and the principles in which faith is founded appear to be that integrity, that candour, that sincerity of mind, that love of goodness, that reverent sense of God's perfections, which are in themselves the highest of moral endowments and the sources of all other virtues, if indeed there be any virtue which is not contained in these. Faith therefore, in this view of it, is the full assemblage and sum of all the Christian graces, and less the beginning than the perfection of the Christian character: But if in any instance the force of external evidence should work an unwilling belief where these qualities of the heart are wanting, in the mere act of forced belief there is no merit: "The devils believe and tremble." Hence, we may understand upon what ground and with what equity and reason salvation is promised in Scripture to faith, without the express stipulation of any other condition. Every thing that could be named as a condition of salvation on the gospel plan is included in the principle no less than in the effect of that faith to which the promises are made.

On the other hand, it is easy to perceive that the sentence of condemnation denounced against the unbelieving is not to be applied to the ignorance or the error of the understanding; but to that unbelief which is the proper opposite of the faith which shall inherit the blessing,—that which arises from a dishonest resistance of conviction—from a distaste for moral truth—from an alienation of the mind from God and goodness. This unbelief contains in it all those base and odious qualities which are the opposites of the virtue of which true faith is composed: It must be "nigh unto cursing," inasmuch as in the very essence and formality of its nature it is an accursed thing.

Lest any thing that has been said should seem to derogate from the merit of the apostles' faith, I would observe, that whatever degree of evidence they might have for some part of their belief, in particular for the important fact of our Lord's resurrection, they had ample exercise for it in other points, where the evidence of their sense was not to be procured, or any external evidence that might

be equally compulsive, for the whole of their faith. For the great doctrines of the Father's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice of himself—of the efficacy of the Mediatorial intercession—of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit—of the resurrection of the body—of the future happiness of the righteous and misery of the wicked—of the future judgment to be administered by Christ,—for these and many other articles, the apostles had not more than the testimony of their senses : It is not therefore to be imagined that they were deficient in that meritorious faith which believeth what it hath not seen ; nor is the reproof to Thomas to be extended to the whole of his conduct, but confined to that individual act of incredulity which occasioned it. Thomas, with the rest of the delegated band, set the world a glorious example of an active faith, which they are the happiest who best can imitate : And seeing faith hath been shown to partake in its beginnings of the evidence of consciousness itself, and to hold of those first principles of knowledge and intellect of which it cannot be doubted that they are the immediate gift of God, let us all believe ; and let us pray to the Father to shed more and more of the light of his Holy Spirit, and to help our unbelief.

SERMON XVIII.

By JOSEPH WHITE, D.D.

On the Life and Character of Christ.

2 Cor. iv. 10.

That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest.

HAVING before viewed the life and character of Mahomet,* let us now turn our eyes to a brighter picture ; where every grace that can recommend religion, and every virtue that can adorn humanity, are so blended as to excite our admiration, and engage our love. Independently, indeed, of all comparison, the character of Jesus Christ stands forward as the most striking and illustrious representation of *whatever things are true, or just, or of good report* ; and claims our praise by its own intrinsic excellence.

In the life of our blessed Lord we discover nothing that can either create suspicion, or excite aversion ; we see a

* In the Bampton Lectures.

thousand excellencies which the hardest enemies of the Gospel are compelled involuntarily to approve. All that negative virtue can secure, and all that positive merit can attain, appear to have been united with equal lustre in this lovely and venerable pattern of Christian imitation.

But before I descend to the particulars which it may be necessary to bring forward in contrasting the life of Christ with that of Mahomet, I beg your permission to introduce some interesting, and, I hope, not impertinent reflections on the nature of that historical form in which the Christian revelation has been transmitted to us.

This form involves the correctness of system without its abstruseness, and the energy of eloquence without its ostentation. It happily unites the brightness of example with the precision and perspicuity of precept. To the minuteness of detail which belongs to biography, it adds much of that regular arrangement, and of that vivid colouring, by which the more eminent writers of poetry have endeavoured to mark the distinguishing and appropriate qualities of their favourite heroes. Instead of sometimes amusing and sometimes astonishing us, with those brilliant, but indistinct and fleeting impressions which are excited by general descriptions, or elaborate panegyric, it leads us through a series of uniform and characteristic actions, into a clear and full knowledge of the agent. It enables, and gently impels the mind to combine by its own operation all the detached instances of virtue into one bright assemblage. It transports the imagination, as it were, into the presence of the person whose excellencies are recorded, and gives all the finer sensibilities of the soul an immediate and warm interest in every word and every action. Hence, the manner in which the sacred writers have described the actions of Christ, not only increases the efficacy of his instructions, but constitutes a new, a striking, and peculiar species of evidence for the truth of his religion.

This position it may be of use for us to illustrate yet further.

To compare the character of Socrates with that of Christ is foreign to our present purpose : but of the manner in which

their lives have been respectively written, we may properly take some notice. On the history of Socrates then, have been employed the exquisite taste of Xenophon, and the sublime genius of Plato. The virtues of this extraordinary man are selected by them as the noblest subjects for the fullest display and most active exertion of their talents; and they have brought to the task not merely the sagacity of philosophers, but the affection of friends, and the zeal of enthusiasts.

Now the different style of their writings, and the different tempers as well as capacities of the writers themselves, have produced some variety both in the scenes in which they have exhibited their master, and in the opinions which they have ascribed to him. But in the composition of each, Socrates is distinguished by a noble contempt of popular prejudice, and perverted science; by an ardent admiration and steady pursuit of virtue; by an anxious concern for the moral improvement of his hearers; and by an heroic superiority to the pleasures of life, and to the terrors of impending death. What his illustrious biographers have performed in such a manner as to engage the attention and excite the admiration of successive ages, has been accomplished with yet greater success by the sacred writers. They have attained the same end under heavier difficulties, and by the aid of means, which, if they are considered as merely human, must surely be deemed inadequate to the task which they undertook. They were by no means distinguished by literary attainments, or by intellectual powers. Their education could not bestow on them very exalted or correct ideas of morality; and their writings were destitute of every recommendation from the artificial ornaments of style. Yet have these four unlearned men effected by their artless simplicity a work, to which the talents of the two greatest writers of antiquity were not more than equal.

They have exhibited a character far more lovely in itself, and far more venerable, than fiction has ever painted; and in their mode of exhibiting it, they surpass the fidelity, the distinctness, and precision, which two of the most celebrated writers have been able to preserve,

when exerting the whole powers of their genius, and actuated by the fondest attachment, they were endeavouring to do justice to the noblest pattern of real virtue of which antiquity can boast. In Jesus have the Evangelists described brighter and more numerous virtues, than Socrates is said even by his professed admirers to have possessed. In their descriptions they have without effort, and under the influence, it must be allowed, of sincere conviction only, maintained a greater uniformity than the most prejudiced reader can discover in the beautiful compositions of Plato and Xenophon.

If the desire of communicating their own favourite opinions, or the mutual jealousy of literary fame, be assigned as a reason for the diversity of representation in the two Greek writers, we allow the probability of both suppositions; but we contend, that each of these motives is inconsistent with that love of truth, which is necessary to establish the credibility of a biographer. We also contend, that the Evangelists were really possessed of this excellent quality; that they never deviated from it, in order to indulge their enmity or envy; and that with apparent marks of difference in their language, their dispositions, and perhaps in their abilities, they have yet exhibited the character of Christ the most striking, if their narratives be separately considered; and the most consistent, if they be compared with each other. Be it observed too, that the difficulty of preserving that consistence increases both with the peculiarity and magnitude of the excellencies described, and with the number of the persons who undertake the office of describing them.

If it be said, that the superior pretensions of Christ, as a divine teacher, required more splendid virtues than what are expected from Socrates, who taught morality upon principles of human reason only; whence is it that the unpolished, uncultivated minds of the Evangelists should even conceive a more magnificent character than the imaginations of a Plato, or a Xenophon? What aids did they apparently possess for representing it more advantageously? That those four unlettered men should have drawn such

a character, with more uniformity in the whole, and with more sublimity in the parts, is therefore a fact which can be accounted for only, by admitting the constant and immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, the real existence of Christ's perfections, and the strong and lasting impression they made upon those who conversed with him. Those perfections themselves were, indeed, extraordinary both in kind and in degree. In their kind they are admirable for the conduct of Christ's followers: and in their degree, they are eminently and indisputably proportioned to the transcendent and unrivalled dignity of his own mission.

Every reader of discernment is disgusted at the fictitious representation of "those faultless monsters which the world ne'er saw:" every writer of taste finds it necessary to procure credit to his representations, by throwing some shades of error and infirmity over the wisest and best of men; every impartial and profound enquirer into the constitution of the human mind is aware that the ruling passion, by which the most amiable and venerable of men are distinguished, sometimes degenerates into excess; that the indiscriminate and eager pursuit of virtue itself imperceptibly leads into vice; that the most illustrious characters are distinguished by some predominant excellence; that he who surpasses his fellow-creatures in some instances, falls below them in others; and that, among the sons of men, no one has yet existed, in whom every great and good quality, every religious and social perfection, have been at once united.

To these incontrovertible and general rules, the life of Christ affords one glorious exception. There is a variety in his virtues, which never shocks probability; and at the same time there is an uniformity, which never creates satiety. Upon the most common actions he bestows a novelty in his manner of performing them: the uncommon he recommends by a simplicity, which adds to their charms, without degrading their dignity.

Here, indeed, it becomes me to observe, that in all his actions he, without any appearance of design, preserves that decorum which the ancient philosophers

have explained with so much ingenuity, and which is utterly beyond the reach of affectation or imposture. In abstaining from licentious pleasures he was equally free from ostentatious singularity, and churlish sullenness. In partaking, as he sometimes did, the innocent enjoyments of life, he never fell into the gaiety of the Epicurean; in relinquishing them, when the great ends of his mission required it, he was equally free from the assumed and unnatural insensibility of the Stoic. When he complied with the established ceremonies of his countrymen, that compliance was not accompanied by any marks of bigotry or superstition: when he opposed their rooted prepossessions, his opposition was perfectly exempt from the captious petulance of a controversialist, and the undistinguishing zeal of an innovator.

It is well known, that some virtues owe much of their lustre to local and temporary circumstances; and that the same actions which may be highly, nay even justly, extolled in one age or country, are in others surveyed with listless indifference. "In antiquity," says an acute observer*, "the heroes of philosophy, as well as those of war and patriotism, have a grandeur and force of sentiment which astonishes our narrow souls, and is rashly considered as extravagant and supernatural. They, in their turn, I allow, would have equal reason to consider as romantic and incredible the degree of humanity, clemency, order, tranquillity, and other social virtues, to which in the administration of government we have attained in modern times, had any one been then alive to have made a fair representation of them."

The life of Christ blends these opposite and seemingly irreconcilable excellencies. It avoids their extravagance, and supplies their defects. The courage of our Lord was active in encountering the dangers to which he was exposed, and passive under the aggravated calamities which the malice of his foes heaped upon him. Yet his fortitude was remote from every appearance of rashness; and his patience was equally exempt from abject pusillanimity and stupid apathy.

* Hume's Essays.

He was firm without obstinacy, and humble without meanness. In the general tenor of his life he was mild and gentle; the promoter of peace amongst other men, and the strictest observer of it in his own behaviour. But when great and real occasions called for different deportment, he displayed a nobleness of mind, a contempt of danger and death, such as the importance of his mission required from him, and such as the consciousness of rectitude could alone inspire.

To the virtues of Christ, whether we consider them as too sublime to excite any sentiments of presumptuous emulation, or too rational not to justify our endeavours to imitate them; whether we examine his private or his public conduct; may in a nobler sense be applied the beautiful and animated language, in which a celebrated orator of antiquity has extolled those arts, by which he was himself distinguished. "*Adolescentian alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas, res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.*"

Those virtues, indeed, will in no age and no country lose either their usefulness, their beauty, or their merit. They are in various degrees practicable; under every form of government, whether free or despotic, whether barbarous or refined; and in every state of knowledge, whether it be imperfect or improved. In the lowest condition of the world, they tend to lessen the miseries and disorders to which the unsearchable providence of God has subjected our species: they will increase the stock of our happiness, and axalt our nature to the highest perfection, when accompanied by every assistance which reason, which philosophy, and civilization, can bestow in forming the moral or the religious character of man.

These observations will, I trust, both elucidate and justify the biographical form in which Revelation is conveyed to us. God, it is true, might have made known to us his will, by a series of laws, by abstract reasonings, by short instructive sentences, by copious and regular systems, or by any of the various modes of human composition. But Christianity aims at a nobler end, and pursues it by

the most proper and efficacious methods. We read, indeed, the opinions and the belief of Socrates, and the commands and promises of Mahomet. But by Jesus Christ, virtue, of every kind and in every degree, is exemplified as well as taught. He is the pattern as well as the teacher of the duties we are to perform. His precepts shew us what we ought to practise; his conduct convinces us that it is practicable; and the rewards which he has offered are powerful incentives to us to practise it from the best motives, and in the best manner. His resurrection from the grave confirms our faith; his ascension to glory animates our hopes; the actions of his life, and the circumstances of his death, enlarge and invigorate our charity. By these means all the parts of Christianity form one great and consistent whole: every moral rule is realized, and becomes a proof of religious truth; whilst every religious truth, in its turn, illustrates and enforces every moral rule. The actions of God himself are, indeed, invisible; those of men are imperfect; but the actions of Christ (considered in his human character) are both visible and perfect: they are level to our apprehensions, and most worthy of our imitation.

Religion is thus made intelligible to all, because all are bound to obey it. It is accompanied by a species of demonstration, which the meanest cannot misunderstand; it is recommended by such an instance of its beauty and its usefulness, as is calculated to remove every scruple, and to silence every objection.

To evince the justness of these general observations, I shall now enter more particularly upon that comparison between the character of Christ and that of Mahomet, to which I am led by the subject of these Lectures.

The situation and manners of the Jews at the time when our Lord entered upon his public ministry, and the opposition to the gospel, to which they gave birth, have already been the subject of our consideration. We have seen, that of the many false and mistaken notions which then prevailed among that blind and deluded people, the expectations of a temporal Messiah was the most extensive and most important. Impatient

under the galling yoke of servitude, and blindly attached to an opinion, which was at once supported by national pride, and in appearance founded on the literal and express authority of divine revelation; the people in general, and the vulgar in particular, were eager to admit, and zealous to defend, the claims of every pretender to this splendid character. The peculiar nature and wide-spread influence of this prejudice offered the most favourable opportunity, and presented the fairest prospect of temporal authority and dominion, which could have been desired by the most sanguine and ambitious impostor. But of this opportunity no advantage was taken by Jesus Christ. The plan which he pursued was in every respect the reverse of what an interested deceiver would have concerted, whose hopes of success were founded only in the machinations of human policy.

His first public appearance was in the highest degree unpopular, and opposed to all the prejudices and all the pride of his countrymen. Instead of alluring them by the prospect of temporal dominion, to which their hopes and expectations universally pointed, he proclaimed the commencement of a spiritual and invisible kingdom, little calculated to attract the attention of a people, who had never been accustomed to raise their views beyond the objects of sense; and totally inconsistent with every opinion which had been transmitted to them by tradition, and sanctified among them by authority. Instead of erecting his victorious standard as the glorious redeemer of Israel, their mighty deliverer from the disgraceful bondage of Roman oppression, and from the power of every earthly foe; he offered them a redemption, more beneficial indeed, though less attractive to the sensual mind; a redemption from the dreadful tyranny of death. He invited them to a deliverance greater in itself, though less consonant to their wishes, than exemption from servitude to the Roman power; a deliverance from the yet severer and more ignominious slavery of sin.

Had interest, or ambition, been the guide of his actions, he would certainly have assumed that character, to which the warmest hopes and the most rooted prepossessions of the Jews universally in-

clined. He would not have opposed alike the pride of princes, and the superstition of the people; he would have either courted popularity, or grasped at dominion; he, at least, would not have taken every measure, that had a natural tendency to alarm the jealousy of the magistrate, and to provoke the displeasure of the multitude.

As ambition had no share in his claims, as his kingdom was neither formed on the policy, nor supported by the power of the world, he sought not its favour, nor shrunk from its displeasure. Instead of labouring to increase the number of his followers, by an insinuating flexibility in his own manners, or by a corrupt compliance with their prejudices, he gave offence by the unaffected plainness of the one, and by an undisguised opposition to the other. He disdained to conciliate the affections of any class of men, however dignified by their station, or formidable for their power, by any base or dishonourable concessions: he did not endeavour to win even their assent by a servile or a treacherous accommodation of his doctrines to their follies, or their vices. At the same time he opposed those vices, not with the indiscriminate rage of a blind enthusiast, but with the steady resolution of a wise and upright mind, that mixed zeal with knowledge, and added conviction to authority. Even by the confession of his enemies, *he was true, and taught the way of God in truth, neither cared he for any man: for he regarded not the persons of men.* (Matt. xxii. 16.)

A conduct like this was utterly inconsistent with the intricate wiles of policy, or the aspiring views of ambition. Far from engaging in the pursuit of secular power and authority, the blessed Jesus repeatedly and peremptorily rejected them when offered to his hands. He disclaimed the office of a ruler or a judge; he even fled from the infatuated multitude, who acknowledged him for their king, and would have exalted him to a throne.

The impostor of Arabia seized the sceptre, before it was offered to him; the dictator of Rome rejected a crown, which it was both unsafe and dishonourable for him to wear; and was conscious, that he had already obtained the solid power of

monarchy, while he reluctantly, though ostentatiously, refused its gaudy appendages. But far different was the conduct of Jesus Christ. He declined as well the reality of dominion which Caesar possessed, as the appearance of it which Mahomet assumed. He declined them, at a time when by accepting them he might have gratified the pride of his countrymen, subdued all the prejudices which obstructed the belief of his mission, and averted many of the dangers which threatened his life.

Those mistaken views of temporal grandeur, which the disciples had indulged, their Master industriously corrected; he sought on every occasion to humble their pride, to draw off their attention from the things of this world, and to fix them on those above.

Men, who set no value on any interests but those which were connected with honour, wealth, and pleasure, contemned the humility of his appearance, and derided the plainness of his preaching. Their pride disdained all association with a person ignobly born, who pursued no measures to exalt himself above the common rank of life. Hence, with an immediate view to that humble appearance which he condescended to assume on earth, the prophet Isaiah thus beautifully delineates his character. *He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not.* (Isaiah liii. 2, 3.)

Even his numerous and stupendous miracles were not wrought through ostentation, or with any view to serve the purposes of human glory. On the contrary, they were acts of the purest and most disinterested benevolence. They have a kind of ethical excellence, a close and striking conformity to the peculiar temper, as well as the distinguishing and important mission of him, by whom they were performed.

He often enjoined the strictest secrecy to those who were spectators of these

mighty works; lest he should appear to affect more than to deserve the high character he sustained. *Go thy way, tell no man,* (Matt. viii. 4. Mark viii. 26. Luke viii. 56.) was his frequent command to those whom he had rescued from the sharp anguish of disease, the gloomy horrors of blindness, or the agonizing distractions of demoniac phrenzy.

From a similar principle arose his condescension in admitting little children to his arms, in blessing them, and recommending them to the protection of his heavenly Father, and to the tender affection of his disciples. From the same principle, he vouchsafed to wash his disciples' feet; and by so amiable an instance of humility inculcated this gracious lesson, that no office of benevolent assistance should be thought contemptible, or unworthy even the dignity of the most exalted character, if thereby a friend may be relieved in pain, or a fellow-creature extricated from distress.

Now if his humility had been only affected, in order to cover designs of which ambition was the hidden motive, there would have been some unguarded moment when the mask would have dropped off. But the whole life of our blessed Lord, in all its vicissitudes, is marked by the same calm indifference to worldly honours, the same manly disregard of popular applause, the same exemption from the impatience of desire when pre-eminence was offered to him, and from the anguish of disappointment when it was refused.

As the conduct of Christ was not actuated by ambition, so neither was it influenced by any other base and inordinate passion. He did not make his doctrine subservient to the gratification of any darling lusts and corrupt affections in himself, or his disciples: on the contrary, he constantly enjoined the practice of the purest, the strictest, and the most refined chastity; not only in outward actions, but even in the inward imaginations of the heart. He boasted of no exclusive privileges, nor claimed any invidious exceptions from the laws which he had prescribed to others. He allowed no licentiousness under the pretence of religion; and transgressed no rules of decency

or of rectitude, under the arrogated sanction of the Divinity.

Though possessed of the most unbounded power, we behold him living continually in a state of voluntary humiliation and poverty; we see him daily exposed to almost every species of want and distress; afflicted without a comforter, persecuted without a protector, and wandering about, according to his own pathetic complaint, because he *had not where to lay his head*.

Though regardless of the pleasures, and sometimes destitute of the comforts, of life, he never provokes our disgust, by the sourness of the misanthrope; or our contempt, by the inactivity of the recluse. He never affected gloomy austerity; nor sought to be sequestered from the world, in order to preserve the spirituality of his mind. But his ministry was professedly, and really, destined to active employment; and engaged in promoting the noblest interests of mankind. He therefore freely mixed with them in all the habits of social intercourse: and in those moments, when all the avenues of the heart are open to gaiety and affection, he silently instructed his companions in the rare, but exquisite art of being cheerful without levity, and of uniting solid improvement with harmless entertainment. Socrates conversed familiarly with the impious and the licentious, for the sake of correcting more effectually their errors, and restraining their vices; but his reasonings are sometimes unnecessarily abstruse, sometimes paradoxical, and very often indecisive: and in his behaviour instances may be found where his gaiety degenerates into buffoonery, and his irony into bitter and indecent sarcasm. Jesus deigned to associate with publicans and sinners: but he always preserved an exact decorum in word and deed; and even in his most familiar conversations he steadily kept in view the momentous end for which he came into the world.

His attention to their welfare was evidenced not only by his salutary injunctions, which breathed the full and genuine spirit of compassion and love; But by his readiness to embrace every opportunity of relieving their distresses, and

administering to their wants. He was, therefore, in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense, *eyes to the blind; feet was he to the lame; and the blessings of them that were ready to perish came upon him*. (Job xxix. 15, 13.) In every period and circumstance of his life we thus behold dignity and elevation blended with love and pity: something, which, though it awakens our admiration, yet attracts our confidence. We see power; but it is a power which is rather our security than our dread; a power softened by tenderness, and soothing, while it awes.

And yet, with all the gentleness of a meek and lowly mind, we behold an heroic firmness, which no terrors could shake, and no opposition could restrain. This union of opposite qualities constitutes, indeed, the distinguishing beauty of his character. It presents us, as it were, with the lights and shades, which, mixed in due proportion, contribute to the finishing of the picture. Had his actions been governed only by the soft and yielding influences of gentleness and compassion, he never could have completed a work, which called for the most determined efforts of active zeal and fortitude. Besides this deficiency in point of positive exertion, his conduct, if wholly guided by the gentler principles of the human heart, would have subjected him to the suspicion of a blind and irrational impulse: it would have been imputed to a complexional felicity of temper, a mere instinctive benevolence; which, having no moral motive, could be entitled to no praise; and which, being destitute of a steady principle, would prove of little benefit to mankind. The conduct of our blessed Lord was, therefore, guided by reason as well as by affection; and was distinguished as much by an heroic zeal for the truth, and an unrelenting opposition to the errors and wickedness of the times, as by the gentler qualities of meekness, compassion, and forbearance.

That the character sustained by our Lord was not assumed, that he was in reality and truth what he appeared to be, is evident from the perfect consistency of his conduct.

In the exemplary uniformity of Cato's

behaviour, we see the cause of that splendid panegyric which the historian has bestowed on him: "** Esse, quam videri, bonus malebat.*" Now on this very principle we assert the sincerity of Christ; because, in every period of his history we find that he never swerves from moral rectitude, nor sinks below the dignity of his religious character. In the private scenes of life, and in the public occupations of his ministry: whether the object of admiration or of ridicule, of love or of persecution; whether, welcomed with hosannas, or insulted with anathemas; we still see him pursuing with unwearied constancy the same end, and preserving the same integrity of life and manners.

To exemplify these extraordinary qualities and virtues in the actions of that life which they adorned, is a task from which I retire with awful diffidence.

Some of the brightest characters which poetry has feigned, or history has recorded, become more pleasing and more interesting to us from the contrast of their weaknesses and excellencies in different situations, or from the mixture of both in the same action. But the life of Christ has none of those inequalities, which it is the delight of the orator to paint, and of the philosopher to analyze. The natural and unaffected deportment which he invariably preserved, without painful exertion, and without insidious design; the consistence between each particular action and each particular situation; the conformity of all his actions to one common rule, the word of God; and their tendency to one common end, the salvation of mankind; may be explored by the profound moralist, must be admired by the pious believer, but cannot be described, surely, without a portion of that matchless simplicity, with which they are recorded by the inspired evangelists. Too plain for ornament, and too grand for illustration, the character of Jesus leaves at a distance the powers of language. Surrounded with the meanest circumstances, and at the same time distinguished by the most important and astonishing events, it seems to baffle equally by its humility, and its majesty, all the feeble efforts of human eloquence.

The birth of our Saviour, placed in the lowest scene of poverty, was first announced to the shepherds, watching their flocks: but the message was brought by an angel, and a multitude of the heavenly host. Though he was laid in a manger in despised Bethlehem, the Magi of the East were conducted by a star to visit the humble spot. Sprung, as he was, from the meanest origin, and educated in the meanest occupation; yet to him was committed the care of immortal souls, and the salvation of a corrupt and deluded world. His associates he had called from the poorest and most ignorant of the people: them, however, did he commission to publish the doctrines of faith; and on them the Holy Ghost descended. Though a friendless wanderer, in his own country, an exile and an outcast, he was distinguished whithersoever he went by signs and miracles. Even in his last hour, when he was numbered with malefactors on the cross; the darkness which overspread the land, the rending of rocks, the opening of graves, and all the convulsions, as it were, of sympathizing nature, gave tokens of the Son of God.

Considered then in all its circumstances, the history of Christ shrinks not from comparison with the most partial and lofty representation of the prophet of Arabia.

Of both we find, that the earlier part of life, before the publication of their respective missions, passed away in silence, private and undistinguished. The first years of Mahomet were busied in the cares of merchandize; till returning to his native city, he devoted to solitude and retirement the leisure which his opulence had procured. The youth of Jesus was spent in domestic privacy; and was remarkable only for affectionate and dutiful submission to his parents; unless indeed, when in the temple he by his ready answers to the questions of the Rabbins, and his skilful exposition of the scriptures, astonished those that heard him, and gave an omen of his future greatness.

The designs of Mahomet were gradually and cautiously unfolded; and in order to prepare the minds of his countrymen for the reception of his faith, he first artfully persuaded his own relations and

domestics, and drew to his side the most powerful of his neighbours.

Jesus walked forth by the sea of Galilee, and saw fishers casting their nets. These were his first converts and disciples. Though they were destitute of riches and of power, he found in them what his ministry required, an honest and a willing spirit. He won them neither by subtle arguments, nor crafty persuasions; but bade them forsake their nets and follow him, to see his humble dwelling, to hear his heavenly discourses to the people, and witness the wonders he was going to perform.

Jesus called his hearers to repentance, but Mahomet to conquest.

At their first appearance they were both compelled to avoid the rage of the multitude, who would have destroyed them: but Mahomet escaped by a secret, ignominious flight, and Jesus by a public miracle.

The revelation of the Arabian prophet was inconsistent; a system of contradiction, continually shifting with the views of his policy, and the necessities of his imposture; now looking towards Mecca, and now to Jerusalem. Widely different was the conduct of Christ. He did not seek to accommodate his doctrine to fortuitous changes in his external circumstances; he did not at one time revoke what he had asserted, or contradict what he had enjoined, at another. Every part of his teaching was regular and consistent in the objects to which it was directed, and the language in which it was conveyed.

Mahomet allured his followers with the glories of a visible monarchy, and the splendor of temporal dominion. In him we beheld the lord of war, and the destroyer of mankind, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands who fell by his desolating sword; laying cities in flames; carrying misery and bloodshed through the earth; and pursued in his victorious career by the lamentations and curses of its inhabitants. In Jesus we see the adorable prince of peace, the friend and saviour of the world, riding meekly to the holy city, hailed with the acclamations and blessings of much people, whom he had rescued from sin and death, wiping the tears from all eyes, and healing every sickness and every disease.

And here the comparison must cease. The events that followed in our Saviour's life are too august to be placed in competition with any mortal power, and can be comprehended only by minds habituated to the contemplation of heavenly objects. Let us consider the passion of our Lord, and the magnificent scenes of his resurrection and ascension; and then ask, in what part of all the history of Mahometism any parallel of resemblance can be found? Let us consider the last days of Christ's continuance upon earth, and how does the prophet of Mecca sink in the comparison! Let us in imagination hear and see the blessed Jesus, when he gives his Apostles authority to go forth and baptize all nations, and preach in his name repentance and remission of sins; when he empowers them to cast out evil spirits, to speak with new tongues, and to work wonders; when he holds up to them the promise of the Comforter, and power from on high; and when, having blessed them, he ascends into heaven, where he is for ever seated in glory on the right hand of God.

But chiefly, what raises Christ and his religion far above all the fictions of Mahomet, is that awful alternative of hopes and fears, that looking for of judgment, which our Christian faith sets before us.

And at that day, when time, the great arbiter of truth and falsehood, shall bring to pass the accomplishment of the ages, and the Son of God shall make his enemies his footstool; then shall the deluded followers of the great impostor, disappointed of the expected intercession of their prophet, stand trembling and dismayed at the approach of the glorified Messiah.

Then shall they say, Yonder cometh in the clouds that Jesus, whose religion we laboured to destroy, whose temples we profaned, whose servants and followers we cruelly oppressed! Behold he cometh: but no longer the humble son of Mary, no longer a mere mortal prophet, the equal of Abraham and of Moses, as that deceiver taught us; but the everlasting Son of the everlasting Father! The Judge of mankind! The Sovereign of Angels! The Lord of all things both in earth and heaven!

SERMON XIX.

By BISHOP PORTEUS.

On the Causes of Unbelief.

JOHN iii. 19.

This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

WHEN the several parts of the text are reduced to their proper order; they give us the four following distinct propositions.

That light is come into the world.

That men have preferred darkness to this light.

That the reason is because their deeds are evil.

And that the consequence of this choice will be condemnation.

It may be worth our while to bestow a little consideration on each of these particulars.

In this enlightened age, it will be thought no paradox to assert that *light is come into the world*. The position is true in more senses than one; but there is only one that can suit this passage. The light here meant can be no other than that divine one of revelation, which brought life and immortality (2 Tim. i. 10.) along with it. The Christian dispensation is constantly and uniformly described in holy writ under this figure, from the time that the first faint glimmerings of it appeared at a distance, till it shone forth in its full lustre and glory under the gospel. Indeed there seems to be scarce any other image, that could so fitly and adequately represent it to us. It is of the same use to the spiritual, that the light of the sun is to the natural world. It gives life, health, and vigour, to God's new creation; it makes the *day of salvation* (2 Cor. vi. 2.) to dawn upon us; it opens to us the prospect of another and a better life; it is a *light to our feet, and a lantern to our paths* (Psal. cxix. 105.), and guides us in the way to happiness and glory.

The next assertion contained in the text, that *men have preferred darkness to this light*, may seem to require a proof.

To love darkness rather than light is so opposite to our nature, so inconsistent with our general manner of proceeding, that it seems at first incredible. If it really is the case, so perverse a choice was never made but in religion. Every other kind of light men catch at with the utmost eagerness. The light of the heavens has been ever esteemed one of the greatest blessings that Providence has bestowed upon us, without which, even life itself would be hardly thought worth possessing. The love of knowledge, that light of the mind, appears in us as early, and operates in us as strongly, as any one principle in our nature; and in every instance, the human understanding naturally lays hold on every opportunity of information, and opens itself on every side to let in all the light it is capable of receiving.

How then comes it to pass, that with a mind thus constituted, thus thirsting after light, men can sometimes bring themselves to do such violence to their nature, as to chuse darkness, in that very point where it is of the utmost importance to have all the light they can possibly get; where every step must lead to happiness or misery, and every error draw after it the most fatal and lasting consequences? Yet our Saviour tells us, that this was actually the case in his days, and would to God that daily experience did not show the possibility of it in our own! But when we see the various artifices with which revelation is every day assailed; when we see one man most ingeniously reasoning us out of every ground of certainty, and every criterion of truth; involving self-evident axioms in obscurity and confusion; and entangling our understandings in the gloomy intricacies of scholastic subtilty and metaphysical abstraction: when we see another exhausting all the powers of a most fertile genius, in ridiculing the dispensations of the God that gave it; making the most awful subjects of religion the constant sport of his licentious wit; and continuing to sit with unabated levity in the seat of the scorner, even on the very brink of the grave: when we see a third, with the strongest professions of sincerity and good faith, proposing most humbly what he calls his doubts and scruples, and thereby creating them in the minds of

others; extolling ~~one~~ part of Christianity in order subvert the rest; retaining its moral precepts, but rejecting its miracles and all its characteristic doctrines; giving an air of speciousness to the wildest singularities, by the most exquisite graces of composition, and insidiously undermining the foundations of the Gospel, while he pretends to defend it: when I say our adversaries assume such different shapes, and set so many engines at work against us; what else can this mean but to take from us all the sources of religious information, and bring us back again to the darkness and ignorance of our Pagan ancestors? It is to no purpose to tell us here of the light of nature. It is an affront to our senses, to offer us that dim taper, in the room of the *sun of righteousness*. (Mal. iv. 2.) Whatever may be said (and a great deal has been said) of the modern improvements of science, the discoveries of philosophy, and the sagacity of human reason, it is to Revelation only we are indebted for the superior light we now boast of in religion. If nature could ever have pointed out to us right principles of belief, and rules of conduct, she might have done it long ago; she had four thousand years to do it in before the coming of Christ. But what little progress was made in this vast space of time; what egregious mistakes were committed, not only in the speculative doctrines of religion, but in some of the most essential points of practical morality, I need not remind you. How comes it then to pass, that this blind guide is at last become so quick-sighted? How comes her eye on a sudden so strong and clear, as to see into the perfections and will of God, to penetrate into the dark regions of futurity, to take in at one view the whole compass of our duty, and the whole extent of our existence? It is plain some friendly hand must have removed the film from her eyes; and what other hand could this be than that gracious beneficent one, which gave eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; which helped the impotence, and healed the infirmity of nature, in every instance, in none more than in this? It is in short from the sacred sources of the Gospel, that reason drew that light she now enjoys. Let then men walk, if they will be so perverse, *by this lesser light*. (Gen.

i. 16.), which was only intended to *rule the night* (ib.) of heathenism; but let them be so honest as to confess that it is only a borrowed, a reflected light; that it owes much the greatest part of its present lustre to that greater, that better light of the gospel, whose province it is to *govern the day* (Gen. i. 16.), and to *lighten every man that cometh into the world*. (John i. 9.)

Let us however suppose for a moment (what can never be proved) that mankind are now much better able to investigate truth, and to find out their duty by themselves, than they were in former ages; and that reason can give us (the utmost it ever did or can pretend to give) a perfect system of morality. But what will this avail us, unless it could be shewn that man is also perfect and uncorrupt? A religion that contained nothing more than a perfect system of morality, might perhaps suit an angel; but it is only one part, it is only a subordinate part, of the religion of a man and a sinner. It would be but very poor consolation to a criminal going to execution, to put into his hands a complete collection of the laws of his country, when the poor wretch perhaps expected a reprieve. It could serve no other purpose than to embitter his agonies, and make him see more clearly the justice of his condemnation. If you chuse to do the unhappy man a real service, and to give him any substantial comfort, you must assure him that the offence for which he was going to die was forgiven him; that his sentence was reversed; that he would not only be restored to his prince's favour, but put in a way of preserving it for the future; and that if his conduct afterwards was honest and upright, he should be deemed capable of enjoying the highest honours in his master's kingdom. But no one could tell him this, or at least he would credit no one that did; except he was commissioned and authorized by the prince himself, to tell him so. He might study the laws in his hands till the very moment of his execution, without ever finding out from them that he should obtain a pardon.

Such, the scriptures inform us, was the state of man before Christ came into the world. He had fallen from his original innocence. He was a rebel against God,

and obnoxious to his wrath. The sentence of death had passed upon him, and he had no plea to offer to arrest the execution of it. Reason, you say, gives him a perfect rule to walk by. But he has already transgressed this rule; and if even this transgression were cancelled, yet if left to himself, he may transgress it again the next moment. He is uneasy under his sentence, he wants forgiveness for the past, assistance for the future; and till you can give him this, it is an insult upon his misery to talk to him of a perfect rule of action. If this be all that reason can give him (and it is really much more than it can give him) he must necessarily have recourse to Revelation. God only knows, and God only can tell, whether he will forgive, and upon what terms he will forgive the offences done against him; what mode of worship he requires; what helps he will afford us; and what condition he will place us in hereafter. All this God actually has told us in the Gospel. It was to tell us this, He sent his Son into the world, whose mission was confirmed by the highest authority, by signs from Heaven, and miracles on earth; whose life and doctrine are delivered down to us by the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood; who were too curious and incredulous to be themselves imposed upon, too honest and sincere, too plain and artless, to impose upon others.

What then can be the reason that men still refuse to see, and persist in *loving darkness rather than light*? They will tell you perhaps, that it is because the Gospel is full of incredible mysteries; but our Saviour tells you, and he tells you much truer, that it is *because their deeds are evil*. The mysteries and difficulties of the Gospel can be no real objection to any man that considers what mysteries occur, and what insuperable objections may be started, in almost every branch of human knowledge; how often we are obliged, in our most important temporal concerns, to decide and to act upon evidence, incumbered with far greater difficulties than any that are to be found in scripture. If we can admit no religion that is not free from mystery, we must, I doubt, be content without any religion at all. Even the religion of nature itself the whole con-

stitution both of the *natural* and the *moral* world, is full of mystery; and the greatest mystery of all would be, if, with so many irresistible marks of truth, Christianity should at last prove false. It is not then because the Gospel has too little light for these men that they reject it, but because it has too much. *For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* (John iii. 20.) The light of the Gospel is too prying and inquisitive for such an one. It reveals certain things which he could wish to conceal from all the world, and if possible from himself. Nor is this all; it not only reveals, but it reproves them. It strikes him with an evidence he cannot bear; an evidence not only of its own truth, but of his unworthy conduct. The Gospel does indeed offend him; but it is not his understanding, it is his conscience, that is shocked; he could easily credit what it requires him to believe; but he cannot, or rather he will not, practise what it commands him to do.

It is plain that such a man cannot possibly admit a Revelation that condemns him; and it is as plain that the man of virtue cannot spurn the hand that is graciously stretched out to reward him. If he is a truly virtuous man, that is, one who sincerely labours to know his duty, and sincerely intends to perform it, he cannot but wish for more light to guide him in the investigation, more assistance to support him in the discharge of it, more happiness to crown his perseverance in it, than bare reason alone can afford him. This is what all the best and wisest Heathens most ardently desired, what nature has been continually looking out for with the utmost earnestness of expectation. When with a mind thus disposed he sits down to examine the Gospel, suggest to me the least shadow of a reason why he should reject it. He finds in it a religion, pure, holy, and benevolent, as the God that gave it. He finds not only its moral precepts, but even its sublimest mysteries, calculated to promote internal sanctity, vital piety, universal philanthropy. He finds it throughout so great and noble, so congenial to the finest feelings, and most generous sentiments of his soul; that he cannot but wish it may be true; and never yet, I be-

lieve, did any good man wish it to be true, but he actually found it so. He sees in it every expectation of nature answered, every infirmity supported, every want supplied, every terror dissipated, every hope confirmed; nay, he sees that God has done exceeding abundantly above all that he could either ask or think; that he has given him (what reason could hardly have the idea of) eternal happiness in a life to come. Will this man *love darkness rather than that light*? Will he chuse to pursue virtue with much pains, little success, and no other wages than death; or to be led to her through a safe and easy path by an infallible guide, who does not desire him to *serve God for nought*.

Let me not however be understood to assert, or to represent the text as asserting, that all unbelievers are without exception absolutely wicked men. There are some, no doubt, who lead, what is called, good moral lives. Yet, if you examine even these very strictly, you will, I believe, seldom find that their virtue is so pure, so uniform, so extensive, so complete in all the several branches of duty, as that of a truly devout Christian. And it should be observed also, that men may reject the Gospel, not only because they are dissolute in their conduct, but for various other reasons: because, perhaps, they are too busy, or too idle, to examine carefully into the truth; because, like Gallo, *they care for none of these things*, and like him, *drive them away*, with contempt from the judgment seat (Acts xviii. 16.) of their own mind; because they give themselves up to a warm lively imagination; and are impatient to shew that they have more depth of thought, more freedom of spirit, and elevation of mind, than the rest of the world; because, in fine, they are ambitious to figure at the head of a sect, to enjoy the delightful triumph of beating down long-established opinions, and erecting upon their ruins a little favorite system of their own. Now all these causes of infidelity, though less culpable than downright profligacy, are yet evidently great faults, and indicate more or less a depraved turn of mind; and from immoralities of this kind at least scarce any sceptics are entirely free. Or, admit that some are; yet these instances are confessedly very rare; and a prudent

man would no more chuse to embark his morality on so precarious a bottom, than he would venture to walk in the dark amidst rocks and precipices, because some perhaps have done it without receiving any harm. In general, therefore, the ground of unbelief laid down by our Saviour in the text, is undoubtedly a true one; and if a man shuns the light, it is an almost certain sign that his deeds are, in some sense or other, in a greater or a less degree, evil, and consequently his condemnation just.

Yet how can this be, you will perhaps say? 'Can God punish his creatures for walking by that light which he himself has set up in their own minds, though he has at the same time perhaps revealed a fuller light from Heaven? Most certainly he can; for the very same reason that a prince might punish his subjects for acting by the law of nature; instead of governing themselves by the civil laws of the land. It is not a matter of indifference, whether you embrace Christianity or not. Though reason could answer all the purposes of Revelation, (which is far, very far from being the case), yet you are not at liberty to make it your sole guide, if there be such a thing as a true Revelation. We are the subjects of the Almighty; and whether we will acknowledge it or not, we live, and cannot but live, under his government. His will is the law of his kingdom. If he has made no express declaration of his will, we must collect it as well as we can from what we know of his nature and our own. But if he has expressly declared his will, that is the law we are to be governed by. We may indeed refuse to be governed by it; but it is at our peril if we do; for if it proves to be a true declaration of his will, to reject it is rebellion.

But to reject or receive it, you may allege, is not a thing in your own power. Belief depends not on your will, but your understanding. And will the righteous judge of the earth condemn you for want of understanding? No? but he may and will condemn you for the wrong conduct of your understanding. It is not indeed in your power to believe whatever you please, whether credible or incredible; but it is in your power to consider thoroughly, whether a supposed incredibility

be real or only apparent. It is in your power to bestow a greater or less degree of attention on the evidence before you. It is in your power to examine it with an earnest desire to find out the truth, and a firm resolution to embrace it wherever you do find it; or on the contrary, to bring with you a heart full of incorrigible depravity, or invincible prepossessions. Have you then truly and honestly done every thing that is confessedly in your power, towards forming a right judgement of revelation? Have you ever laid before yourself in one view the whole collective evidence of Christianity; the consistence, harmony, and connection, of all its various parts; the long chain of prophecies undeniably completed in it; the astonishing and well-attested miracles that attended it; the perfect sanctity of its author; the purity of its precepts; the sublimity of its doctrines; the amazing rapidity of its progress; the illustrious company of confessor, saints and martyrs, who died to confirm its truth; together with an infinite number of collateral proofs and subordinate circumstances, all concurring to form such a body of evidence, as no other truth in the world can shew; such as must necessarily bear down, by its own weight and magnitude, all trivial objections to particular parts? Surely these things are not trifles; surely they at least demand seriousness and attention. Have you then done the Gospel this common piece of justice? Have you ever sat down to consider it with impartiality and candour; without any favorite vice or early prejudice, without any fondness for applause, or novelty, or refinement, to mislead you? Have you examined it with the same care and diligence that you would examine a title to an estate? Have you enquired for proper books? Have you read the defences of revelation as well as the attacks upon it? Have you in difficult points applied for the opinion of wise and learned friends; just as you would consult the ablest lawyers when your property was concerned, or the most skilful physicians when your life was at stake? If you can truly say, that you have done all these things: if you have faithfully bestowed on these enquiries, all the leisure and abilities you are master of, and called in

every help within your reach, there is little danger of any materials doubts remaining upon your mind. But if after all there should, be not afraid; trust in God and be at peace; *if your own heart condemn you not, then may you have confidence towards God.* (1 John iii. 21.) You are in the hands of a gracious Master, who will not require more of you than you are able to perform. To the modest, the humble, the diligent, the virtuous enquirer: who labours after conviction, but cannot thoroughly arrive at it; who never attempts or wishes to infuse his scruples into others; who earnestly strives, who fervently prays, for more light and strength; crying out with all the passionate sincerity of an honest heart, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief,* (Mark ix. 24.); to him every equitable allowance will undoubtedly be made, every instance of compassionate tenderness be shown. *For like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him.* (Ps. ciii. 31.) But to them who neither fear nor regard him; to the bold unbelieving libertine, who is against the gospel, because the gospel is against him; to the man of pride and paradox, who burns to distinguish himself from the vulgar by the novelty of his opinions, and would disdain to follow the common herd of mankind, even though he knew they were leading him to heaven; to the subtle minute philosopher, who refines away every dictate of common sense, and is lost in the dark profound of his own wretched sophistry; to the buffoon, who laughs and takes pains to make all the world laugh at every thing serious and sacred; to the indolent, negligent, superficial, free-thinker, who reads a little, takes for granted a great deal, and understands nothing thoroughly; to the man of pleasure and amusement, who treats all these things with a giddy, wanton, contemptuous, levity; and thinks that the whole fabric of revelation may be overturned, by a silly cavil, or a profane jest, thrown out in the gay moments of convivial mirth: to these I say, and all like these, the Almighty will one day most assuredly show, that his gracious offers of salvation are not to be despised, and trampled upon, and ridiculed with impunity.

Consider then, you, who reject the Gospel (if any such be here), consider, I entreat you, on what grounds you reject it; and think a little seriously on these things once more in your lives, before you resolve never to think again. Look well into your own hearts and see whether you are really, what perhaps you profess to be, unbelievers on conviction, or whether you have taken up your infidelity, as some do their faith, upon trust. It becomes not *us* to judge you uncharitably; but indeed it becomes *you* to examine yourselves very strictly. You may easily deceive the world; you may, if you please deceive yourselves; but God you cannot deceive. He, to whom all hearts are open as the day, he knows whether you are conscientious and honest doubters, or careless, prejudiced, profane despisers, of his word. *It is a small thing for you to be judged of man's judgement; he that judgeth you is the Lord.* (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.); and by the unerring rules of his justice you must finally stand or fall. Think then whether you can face that justice without dismay; whether you can boldly plead before the tribunal of Christ the sincerity of your imbeliet as a bar to your condemnation. That plea may possibly in some cases be a good one. God grant it may in yours! But remember this one thing; that you stake your own souls upon the truth of it.

SERMON XX.

By THOMAS LEFAND, D.D. Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

[Preached in Trinity College, Dublin.]

Prevalence of Infidelity, no Proof nor Presumption against Christianity.

JOHN vii. 42.

Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?

THIS question was deemed sufficient to confound the witnesses of our Lord's power and wisdom, who had ingenuously acknowledged the manifestations of his divine authority. They had been commissioned by the chief priests and pha-

risees to seize him as a seducer, and to bring him before the great council, there to answer for his supposed impiety. They listened to his doctrine: they were filled with reverence and admiration; *no man laid hands on him*: they returned; and in the ardour of astonishment exclaimed,—*never man spake like this man!* But here they are insulted as ignorant and vulgar, possessed with illiberal prejudices, and deceived by pretences which could have no effect on minds more enlightened. They are told of the deference due to the great and learned of their nation. The credulous multitude may ask, *When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these?* But what attention have these gained from men of eminence? The ignorant may say, *of a truth this is the prophet*; but have any of the great or learned, any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him?

Many points of instruction might naturally be deduced from this passage. But it is my purpose to apply it to present times and occasions in a manner more especially adapted to the circumstances of those who hear me.

That divine teacher, who spake as never man spake, still addresses his precepts, his exhortations, his promises, his threatenings, to us, in all wisdom and goodness, with all dignity and authority. The words of eternal life are here inculcated on the weak and inexperienced, *precept upon precept, and line upon line*; and it is their glory and their happiness if (they indeed *continue in the things which they have learned* and been assured of) that each *from a child* hath known the holy scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation. But the time may come when false teachers shall labour to turn away their ears from the truth. And to prepare the mind for other delusions, they may perhaps begin with these or some like insinuations.

"You have indeed been trained in the practice of Christianity. You have been taught to reverence its doctrines, to cherish its hopes, and to dread its threatenings. But, advancing as you now are, to a more extensive knowledge of the world, what deference do you find paid to these things, but by the obscure and recluse, men whose minds are fettered

by prejudice, and enslaved by authority? Do those of liberal intercourse and exalted condition appear at all influenced by what you have been instructed to esteem so sacred? Look round you to the men of greatest reputation for science and erudition. How many of these have laboured to dispel those mists of error in which superstitious ages have been so long involved? Have they not all vanished before the brightness of their reasoning? Away then with the prepossessions of our childish days! and let us freely follow the pleasurable paths of nature, unrestrained by the illusions of bigotry and pious fraud."

Inconsistent as it must appear for these pretenders to unbiased reason, thus to recur to authority, the authority of weak and corrupted men; yet it may be necessary to guard the unwary against their artifice. For this purpose, I would now point your attention to that object which they display before us with so much triumph; the prevalence of unbelief among the great and learned. And the first point I would enforce is this, that

I. It is by no means a presumption against the truth of our religion, that in the active and exalted scenes of life, men reject its authority, either by their practice or professions.

For the present, let us suppose the fact to be, as stated by the adversary. And on the first view of society, there may appear some ground for the supposition. Although many who there support characters of eminence, have, we trust, received the fullest impressions of religion, and, through all the tumult and agitation of this life, look steadily to the blessings of a more glorious existence; yet the light of their examples is intercepted by the busy crowd in which they are engaged. They who force themselves on our attention, and from whom we generally form our judgment, are such as, from their early days, have been directed only to the world and its enjoyments. Nurtured in pride and prosperity, with every seducing object presented to their view, they issue into public life, with imaginations enflamed, passions undisciplined, and understandings imperfectly cultivated. They may have gained those superficial acquirements

which are thought to adorn their stations.

In every art of elegance they may be deeply learned, and exquisitely refined. But the severe pursuit of solid knowledge is intolerable to the undisciplined and enfeebled. And *the words of eternal life*, perhaps, have neither been impressed with due care, nor entertained with that satisfaction so necessary to their effectual improvement. These men are placed in such circumstances as command respect and deference, without a scrupulous or rigorous discussion of their real merit. Their prosperity is intoxicating; they are countenanced and flattered by those around them, who are attached to the same objects, and engaged in the same pursuits. Every instance in which their schemes have been successful serves to confirm them in exalted notions of their own abilities, which have perhaps raised them to what they call honour and distinction. The bustle of the little scene in which they are engaged keeps their minds in perpetual ferment; and their retired enjoyments, if in any degree licentious, leave neither leisure nor power for serious and exalted reflection.

Whatever deference may be due to such men, in our worldly intercourse; however distinguished their abilities may appear in those things which have engrossed their attention; yet surely, neither their situation nor engagements seem to qualify them to become detectors of religious error. They may, without profound reflection, discover the advantageous influence of religion upon social life. They may speak of it with respect, as an instrument of policy, necessary for restraining the lower orders of mankind, yet still as an invention calculated merely for this purpose. In this decision, they may applaud their own discernment, and rejoice in their superiority to all mean prejudice and superstition. But before this decision can have any weight, either with themselves or others, there must be a conviction that it is founded, not on a slight and careless advertence to the subject; not on some popular objection, some apparent difficulty casually suggested and rashly entertained; but on candid, serious, attentive, repeated examination. He who decides either in fa-

vour or in prejudice of a matter so momentous, on any other grounds, evidently forfeits all claims to our attention. It may be therefore worthy of enquiry, whether it be not highly probable that the men now described (and many such there must be, of no small regard in civil life) never have examined the evidence of our faith; and whether it be not a subject which they scarcely can examine with attention and impartiality.

But these are points which seem, from the very nature of the case, to be at once decided.

The days of dissipation and pleasurable indulgence, are evidently not the days of religious enquiry. It is not the business of a mind imperfectly cultivated, an imagination warm and giddy, passions violent, and solicited by perpetual allurements. The turbulence of public life leaves no leisure for those thoughts, which rise beyond the sphere of present objects, how interesting soever and important they may appear. In what happy interval can the man, immersed in the business, the contentions, and competitions of this world, be enabled or disposed to consider the things not of this world? Shall the word of truth, which he hath been habituated to despise, obtain at once, in any period of his engagements, a serious and dispassionate attention? Let us imagine him, in some moment of reflection, reading or conversing on the subject of religion. In either case, the humble preacher of righteousness approaches him without worldly dignity, without artifice or flattery. Could he assure him that the service of God and that of the world were perfectly consistent; that they might go on in amicable union, without the least hazard of the divine displeasure, or the least interruption to the pursuits even of the most corrupt and sensual; he might possibly obtain a patient audience. But his preaching is of a different kind. He thwarts what such men consider as the business and the pleasures of their life, with doctrines the most disgusting. He tells them that their pursuits, however captivating, are no more than *vanity and vexation of spirit*; that high-minded as they may be, they have fixed on the most sordid objects; that they must mortify their corrupt affections, and look with a due indifference to

the things of this world, while they press forward to an eternal inheritance.

But what acceptance can such doctrines gain, when the fastidious hearer is already prepossessed? Far from prevailing over inweterate habits, rooted prejudices and disordered passions, they must be received with aversion and indignation, as a presumptuous attempt to interrupt his favourite pursuits; with scorn and derision, as an insolent claim to a superiority in understanding, over those whom the world pronounces wise and discerning.

This preacher comes in the name of the great God of heaven and earth; and while he denounces the sentence of *tribulation and anguish*, while he discloses the mystery of grace and mercy, offers at the same time the most reasonable evidence of the authority by which he speaks. But his doctrines are received with impatience and disgust; his evidence is weighed in the false balance of prejudice and corruption, with a desire to find it weak and insufficient. And let this fatal prepossession once engage the mind, the clearer the evidence appears, the more offensive must it prove; the more must it be hated, and, of consequence, the more violently opposed. Or, should it force its way through all the obstacles of depravity, it may be entertained for a while, but without a permanent and lively influence; vicious habits and disordered passions soon resume their power; and *the last state of that man, now returning to his usual engagements, is worse than the first.*

Such is the natural progress of the contest between religion and corruption. But what is this to the cause of our holy faith? Is it impaired, or at all affected by the prejudices, by the passions, by the disorders and perversions of the human mind? Is truth of so precarious a nature, that it may be altered or subverted merely at the good pleasure of the negligent, the confident, and presuming? Is the evidence of religion less bright, because the obstinate turn away from it? or its motives less powerful, because sinners resist their influence?

And say not thou that truth must have its due impression on enlightened minds, and that the things rejected by the intelligent and enlightened cannot be true. Truth can make no impression when it is

not examined and considered; when it is excluded and rejected. We do not object to the certainty of a geometric theorem, because the men engaged in other studies will not purchase the knowledge of it by the necessary deductions, or because their capacities are so contracted that they are not capable of the investigation, or their dispositions so averse to abstract reasoning, that they despise or detect it; or because they coldly reject a study tending to interrupt their worldly pursuits. And as to the degree of understanding and illumination annexed to higher stations and engagements, we may not always judge of this with impartiality and discernment. Whatever be the worldly employment to which we are attached, it necessarily contracts and concentrates the mind to one favourite object. The politician is oftentimes as confined in his views, and as incapable of judging of any matter beyond his department, as the mechanic. In the eye of man, his engagements may be splendid and elevated, but they have their bounds as well as the less liberal employments; and beyond these the mind unused to pass, is darkened in the strange and untrodden region.

The case of the men now described is the same with that of the unbelieving rulers in the days of our blessed Lord. These had their corruptions and prepossessions, to which the doctrine of Jesus was utterly unfriendly. Hence they either neglected or cavilled at this doctrine. The declarations of the prophets were explicit; but they refused to search the scriptures. The evidence of miracles, though never beheld with indifference, yet, as in the days of their forefathers, proved by no means irresistible. They tortured their invention to account for them, without doing violence to their prejudices; and they contented themselves with the most irrational and absurd solutions. Nay, we find them proceeding to an extravagance seemingly unnatural. When at the command of our Lord the dead arose from his grave, and thus stupendously manifested the power of God, the glory of this evidence served but to provoke their rage: and when they could no longer doubt or dispute, they sought to destroy the person on whom this miracle was wrought.

When, therefore, we attribute the dis-

regard or disbelief of our religion, too frequently observed in the active and exalted orders of men, to their engagements, their passions, their corruptions and prepossessions, which render them inattentive to the evidence, and averse from the doctrine of the gospel, which incense them against the truth, and harden them against its influence, the causes we assign are fully sufficient to account for this prevailing scandal; they are such as, without any violence to Christian charity, seem naturally deduced from their circumstances and engagements; and such as, we are assured, have in other like instances operated with all the power we ascribe to them?

And far be it from us, to urge them in the spirit of pride or conscious superiority. Even among those who *name the name of Christ*, there is found an opposition to reason still more affecting: I mean in those who believe, and yet remain uninfluenced; who are forced by their passions from the paths of righteousness, at the very time when they acknowledge these to be the only paths of truth and happiness. And, more especially, if among those who have full leisure to search, to try, and to examine, who have no engagements or avocations, fewer trials or temptations to deviate from the religion which they profess, any should prove indolent or obdurate, must we not acknowledge this a grosser and more glaring contradiction to principle, than any to be found in the avowed gainsayer? He disclaims and renounces the authority of his Lord and Master, and thus acts unreasonably; but not inconsistently. He doth not acknowledge that authority, and at the same time resist and defy it. He doth not *confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; Lord of lords, and King of kings*; but he doth not, with the insolent mockery of his murderers, crown him with the ensigns of royalty, and bow the knee before him. What still aggravates the heinousness of this discordance of the nominal christian's conduct with the declaration of his lips is, that the mischief terminates not in himself. He *gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*. He is, in effect, the *enemy of the cross of Christ*; by supporting and countenancing those who are formally and openly so. He adds to the illusions wherewith

the children of this world deceive themselves; who priding themselves in their knowledge of mankind, triumph in every instance of such inconsistency in those who pretend to be *children of light*; and fortify themselves with the imaginary discovery, that men do not themselves believe what they attempt to obtrude on others.

But although it be allowed that the unbelief of the men hitherto described, may fairly be imputed to a blinded understanding and an evil heart; still what shall we say of those retired votaries of knowledge, those men of refinement and speculation, who have studied, examined, and rejected the gospel? Let us in the second place consider, whether then authority be a proof or presumption against the truth of our religion.

II. And *herein is a man's folly*! that a religion first propagated in the midst of learning and refinement, tried at the tribunal of reason, approved by judicious and accurate enquiry, corrupted in times of darkness, recovering its purity with the revival of knowledge, strengthened and confirmed by the gradual increase of intellectual improvement, espoused and defended by the most illustrious in human science, should now at length be deemed the idol of ignorance and scorn of the wise!—But who are the wise that affect this scorn? Are they the attentive laborious prosecutors of knowledge; the glorious luminaries of science, who have spread its influence through the world; the illustrious sages who have directed and adorned society? In these our religion finds its most strenuous defenders. Or are they men who owe the greater part, if not the whole, of their reputation, to this their opposition to the gospel? If so, is there not reason to suspect that the gainsayer may be oftentimes extolled far beyond his real deservings? For, “many talk of the truth, who never sounded the depth from whence it springeth.” (Hooker.)

If he lives in the midst of superstition and idolatry, he may without any extraordinary abilities discover, that the religion of his country cannot be from God. He may point his ridicule against its corrupt doctrines with sufficient liveliness, and yet without any wonderful ele-

vation of genius; just as he may point his invective against the cruelty of persecution, without any extraordinary or exalted benevolence. Yet still he may not have the ingenuous caution and discernment necessary to distinguish the corruptions from the pure and essential parts of christianity. He may wantonly extend his censure to these, and be adured; although he but repeats those arguments in one country, which have been repeatedly and effectually refuted in another.

Where religion is professed in greater purity, he may find doctrines which shock the pride of reason, and may glory in that freedom which examines them without reserve or scruple. Yet he may be precipitate enough to condemn the doctrines which transcend, with those which contradict his reason, or he may deride the true distinction. Yet it may not be the less just, because frequently repeated. He may be offended at the endless subjects of religious controversy, in a state of religious liberty; he may conclude that every system is equally false. Yet this may be the conclusion of a rash, an indolent, an inattentive reasoner. And genius and understanding do not always secure against rashness, indolence, and inattention.

In general we know, that an inferior degree of intellectual powers is sufficient for objecting, perplexing, and confounding. In times more distinguished for the superficial elegancies of knowledge, than for deep enquiry and collected reasoning, even this inferior degree may be admired and applauded. And he who employs his abilities, of whatever rank or degree, in opposition to our faith, hath already gained the whole name of the corrupt and vicious, a powerful party, in his favour. Prejudiced, and partial to the advocates of their folly, they easily mistake an affected ostentatious delicacy for liberality of sentiment; a liveliness, and extravagance of fancy for acuteness and penetration; bold assertion for argument and knowledge; fluent elocution for just reasoning; darkened subtilty for deep and critical disquisition; and because these men have not been convinced, they may rashly and ignorantly conclude that they have never been confuted. Rashly, I say,

and ignorantly; for arguments the most powerful cannot always have their due influence: nor can conviction operate on minds indisposed to the truth.

And may not men of science and speculation be subject to the same indispositions with the active part of mankind? Are not their minds equally liable to be prejudiced against the truth; their hearts equally liable to be alienated from it; their tempers equally liable to be incensed against it?—Let it not be deemed invidious to observe, that they who contend against the authority of our religion, may not always be unexceptionable in their moral conduct. This may be no considerable impediment to their pursuit of human knowledge. The vicious man of intellectual abilities, may proceed in a mathematical disquisition with the utmost regularity. He can here judge of evidence exactly, detect a fallacy most acutely, and steer his course successfully through the most perplexed and difficult researches. His passions do not attend him in his progress; and are by no means interested in his conclusions. Whatever he may collect, or however he may decide, his sensuality is not condemned, his pride is not mortified, his malice is not restrained. He hath, therefore, no temptation to deviate from the exact line of reason and evidence. Not so in his religious enquiries. When he is to enquire into the truth and divinity of the gospel, with all its precepts of purity and meekness, and benevolence, the question, in effect, at least in its immediate consequence, is nothing less than whether the pursuits of all his days have not been vain and abominable; whether the judgments of the Almighty be not denounced against them; whether he should not subdue those affections which now enslave him, and humble himself before his fellow-creature, who hath been injured by his insolence or oppression? In such enquiries, neither knowledge nor refinement, nor penetration, can render such men competent judges. For “while they pretend to such a scrutiny of other evidence,” (to use the words of one of their own order) “they are the readiest to take the evidence of the greatest deceivers in the world, their own pas-

sions.” (Lord Shaftsbury.) And to this, I fear, we are in a great measure, to impute it, that there is no one species of false and sophistical argument, of subterfuge, artifice, and cavil, perplexity, confusion, and inconsistency, but abounds in their reasonings, who are deemed the most distinguished in the cause of infidelity.

Every occupation or profession hath its peculiar distempers, of the mind as well as of the body: men of speculation experience both. Let us suppose a case which frequently occurs, and which surely renders the sufferer an object of tenderest compassion. Suppose the brilliancy of genius clouded, and the native vigour of the mind relaxed by an exquisite sensibility tremblingly alive to every gloomy or disagreeable impression. The man of this irritable mind and this relaxed frame is querulous, restless, dissatisfied; he repines, he accuses the author of what he calls his misery; he cannot bear these cheerful views of Providence with which christianity presents him. He pronounces them false, for they accord not with his immediate feelings. Suppose him more cheerful and more conversant with the world: he has been habituated to regard those excesses condemned so severely by the gospel without abhorrence. His habits, his self-will, and self-flattery, determine him against those doctrines which suppose or express the exceeding heinousness of his conduct, and which, if true, must render him debased and loathsome in his own sight.

Let us suppose, however, that these speculative men who have at any time contended against our faith, were not under the dominion of the more disordered passions: that they have really acquired that philosophical refinement and composure, which they sometimes affect. Still there are passions no less enemies to truth, though their objects be not merely sensual. Do not the love of fame, the vanity of being distinguished, the impatience of being caressed and admired, the hope of being transmitted to posterity, as the great reformers of a superstitious world, the conquerors of general prejudice, and the victorious combatants of

error ; do not these pervert the judgment ? And surely men are not defended from them by science and erudition.

Few there are who do not over-rate their intellectual powers ; who do not secretly exult in a conscious superiority over those around them. And how shall this superiority be displayed ? In times when every art and science have been improved to the utmost, what resource for the man who aspires to literary distinction ? New improvements in the useful arts, or new discoveries in human science, it would be intolerable, it would be precarious, it would be hopeless to attempt. The aspiring and the confident therefore strike naturally into the path of opposition to opinions generally held sacred. The most eminent in human knowledge have asserted and defended them. To deny them, therefore, is to enter the lists with the most eminent in human knowledge ; an object highly flattering to vanity and self-opinion. — If these passions be not eminently discoverable in the disputant of this world, what meaneth his perpetual glorying in his own wisdom ? His affected contempt, and rigorous censure of all those whom he opposes ? To what can we ascribe his precipitate and peremptory decisions on the nature of the infinite and unsearchable, and the ways of his adorable Providence ? His extravagant paradoxes, those feeble efforts of a perverse mind, that is plunged into absurdity, by straining at something new and extraordinary ? Or what hath given birth to his laboured attempts at subtlety and sceptical refinement, obstructed with all the triumph of confidence and self-conceit ? Or, (to appeal to an indisputable fact) what but vain glory prompts our adversary to propagate his unbelief ? When the advocate for religion stands forth in its defence, he may be accused of interested or sinister motives : but he hath a fair and reasonable account to render of his conduct. He pleads that it is his bounden duty and service ; and that he labours for the temporal and eternal interests of his fellow-creatures. But when the adversary displays his untoward zeal, what can he reply to the charge of vain-glory ? Not that he obeys the commands of God, when he denies or doubts his existence, or declares that

this adorable Being beholds not *the things that are on earth*. Not that he looks to *the recompense of reward* ; for he hopes but to lie down with the beasts that perish. Not that he reveres and vindicates the Majesty of Heaven. The hideous vanity of such a plea is at once discoverable in the man who wantonly mistakes, or rashly misconceives those particulars, which he presumes to call injurious to this Majesty. Nor can he pretend a concern for the welfare of society, when he opposes a religion of peace and benevolence, the most effectual support and brightest ornament of social life : when he labours to break down the surest barrier against violations of right and order, to subvert the most powerful motives to every laudable pursuit, to stifle the remorse of the oppressor, to aggravate the sorrows of the afflicted, to harden the already hardened heart, and to thunder despair into the ear, in which humanity should infuse the fairest hopes and tenderest consolations.

Whenever, therefore, it is urged that many wise, and many contemplative, and many men of knowledge and refinement, have opposed our holy faith, let it be remembered, that the wise man hath his weakness and imperfections, the contemplative and refined their prejudices and perversions. But whether the despisers of God's holy law wilfully shut their eyes against the consequences of their presumption, or whether they deceive their own hearts, it is our part to be guarded against the danger of their example. For this purpose I have now endeavoured to inculcate that principle, for which they affect to contend with so much zeal : that you are not to be influenced by authority ; but to labour freely and dispassionately in the search of truth ; that you are not to be offended, because men are found indifferent to what they have not examined, or are incapable of examining ; because they are averse to a doctrine mortifying to their pride, and odious to their corruptions ; or because the superficial, the vicious, or the vain-glorious pretender to speculation hath contended against it. Doth this little band of gain-sayers seem considerable enough to demand your attention ? Behold, then ! we claim your attention for a society infinitely more

numerous and venerable. We set before you the glorious company of apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the redeemed of all nations and ages, the assembly of Christ's faithful followers, who have sprung up even in the most corrupted times; the good and the wise, and the learned, in whose lives and labours his heavenly doctrine hath shone out gloriously and irresistibly. With one voice they call upon you; they adjure you by the mercies of the living God, to use all diligence *to make your calling and election sure*: not to submit blindly and implicitly, but to try, to prove, to exercise that portion of reason, to embrace those opportunities of instruction which God hath granted you, before the distractions of the world have dissipated, before its allurements have seduced, before corruption and vanity have blinded and perverted you.

Listen to the awful admonition. So shall the *God of all grace stablish, strengthen, and settle you* in a steadfast and a lively faith; that faith which shall preserve you *blameless and harmless* amidst a *perverse generation*; which shall make every action of your lives gracious and amiable, and prove at once your guide and comfort through the perplexities and dangers, and calamities of this mortal state; which shall raise you to the glory for which you were created and redeemed; to the eternal inheritance of the sons of God, through Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXI.

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The Doctrine of Divine Grace stated and explained.

JOHN iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

THE doctrine, which is taught by our Saviour in this chapter, seems to be as

great a paradox to some people in our days, as it was to Nicodemus in his own. When they hear any mention made of the operations of the holy Spirit, and the assistances of divine grace, they are apt to ask, with that Master of Israel, How can these things be? How is this consistent with human liberty and moral virtue? Is not this reducing religion into a kind of charm, which operates in a manner for which we cannot account; and converting men into machines, which do not act themselves, but are only acted upon by the arbitrary force of a superior being?

Without concerning myself with endless objections, I shall endeavour to establish the general doctrine, in a manner, to which, I hope, no reasonable exception can be made. In order to this, I shall,

First, propose the doctrine itself. Secondly, shew its foundation in the word of God. Thirdly, mention the limitations and restrictions under which it ought to be admitted. Fourthly, obviate the ill uses which may be made of it; and Fifthly, specify the good ends which it naturally promotes.

I. The doctrine is this; that the Holy Ghost, by a secret operation on men's minds, disposes them to the love, and assists them in the practice of virtue. This influence is commonly called *GRACE*. This is a brief account of the doctrine which has been usually taught in the Christian church; but which *some writers* of *GREAT NORE* (as was before intimated) have treated with a great degree of *RESERVEDNESS*. If it can be defended, it ought; if not, let it be given up.

II. The foundation, which this doctrine has in the word of God, will appear, either from direct assertions of it, or from express promises of assistance, or from directions given concerning it. If the word of God affords us instances in any one of those ways, and much more if it supplies us with instances of them all, they who believe this word of God must consequently receive this doctrine of it as true and useful. Our Saviour directly asserts in the context, that *except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. Here therefore, the new birth, which is the first

step in the new life, and without which no man can become a new creature, is directly ascribed to the secret influence and operation of the holy Spirit. The same thing is asserted by St. Paul; *God, says he, according to his mercy saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* (Titus iii. 5.) The growth and increase of this new life, and the progress which the Christian makes in it, i. e. in plain terms, all the virtues and good qualities, all the habits of goodness, and that practice of universal holiness, to which our religion call us, is uniformly, through the whole tenor of scripture, ascribed to the same cause, *The love of God*, which appears in keeping all his commandments, *is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.* (Rom. v. 5.) *If we mortify the deeds of the body, it is through the Spirit* (Rom. viii. 13.); *if we be filled with all joy and peace in believing, if we abound in hope, it is through the power of the Holy Ghost.* (1b. xv. 13.) Our sanctification is represented as his work, in places too numerous to be mentioned. It is asserted as directly as, in a few plain words, it can be, that *the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.* (1b. viii. 26.) And even where we are exhorted to *work out our own salvation* with the greatest care and solicitude, it is pressed upon us by this consideration, that *God, by the agency and operations of his holy Spirit, worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) More effectually to carry on this gracious work, his delight is with the children of men, and, in a peculiar manner, he dwells in them. *Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?* (1 Cor. vi. 19.) *Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (1 Cor. iii. 16.) Questions these, which carry in them even more than direct assertions; as they intimate, that it is scarce possible, at least that it is a shame, for any Christian to be ignorant of this plain and important point. These are only some of the many passages in Scripture, in which the doctrine of divine assisting grace is inculcated; to which I need add no more, but that plain and full declaration of St. Paul: *Now, if any man have not the*

spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Rom. viii. 9.)

The foundation, which this doctrine has in the word of God, appears likewise from express promises of assistance contained in it. *I will pray the Father, says Christ* (comforting his disciples, under the apprehensions of his own departure from them), *and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* (John xiv. 16, 17.) In which promise, though the degree of divine influence and inspiration was peculiar to the apostles, yet the promise itself belongs, not only to those that were near, but also to those that were afar off; even to as many as should believe on his name. For this comforter was to *abide with them for ever*; in the same sense in which our Saviour promises in another Evangelist; *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And, *If a man* (if any man, to the end of the world) *will love me and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (John xiv. 23.) There is the like promise of the Spirit to them that ask for him, in the eleventh chapter of St. Luke; where our Saviour teaches his disciples how to pray, and urges the duty upon them, from the example of heathen parents; who, if their children ask bread, do not give them a stone; or, if they ask a fish, will not for a fish give them a serpent. *If ye then, says he, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (Ver. 13.)

The directions, which are given in Scripture, with relation to the Spirit and his gifts, shew likewise the foundation, which the doctrine has in the word of God; and are, in effect, so many promises of assistance, if these directions be faithfully observed. Of this kind is that of St. James; *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.* (Ch. i. 5, 6.) For this wisdom is at least one of the manifold gifts of grace, if it does not rather com-

prehend them all; for *the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* (James iii. 17.) Of this kind also are the directions *not to quench the Spirit* (Thess. v. 19.) and *not to grieve him* (Ephes. iv. 30.), either by idleness, or pride, or vice; by a careless inattention to the good thoughts and desires, which he puts into our minds, or by a wilful opposition to them. Our Saviour himself has annexed the holy Spirit to the duty of prayer: and in consideration that *Jesus the Son of God was in in all points tempted like as we are*, but is now *passed into the heavens* (from whence he is both able and willing to distribute those gracious influences, which he purchased for us by his own blood), St. Paul directs us *come boldly, i. e. in full assurance of faith, unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb. iv. 16.)

III. Thirdly, If men had always expressed themselves upon this subject with the same accuracy, which the Apostle uses here, and been content with asserting the doctrine of *grace to help in time of need*, my next particular would have been superseded; which is, to mention the limitations and restrictions, under which this doctrine ought to be admitted. And the first and great one of all is, that it be admitted in no sense, but what is consistent with our nature, and the nature of virtue, so as to leave us men and moral agents. In this respect, therefore, the allusion in the text was not designed to hold. The agency of the Spirit is not like the impetuosity of the wind, which *rends the mountains, and breaks in pieces the rocks* (1 Kings xix. 11, 12.), and carries every thing before it, with a force not to be resisted. He works in a gentle persuasive way, and is found in the still small voice of reason and conscience. His operations are the operations of mind on mind; and if created, if human spirits can influence each other, by arguments, by advice, by monition and persuasion, cannot that infinite Spirit, who not only knows, but fashioned all the hearts of the children of men, influence them likewise, guide them by his counsel, and assist them by his grace, and yet leave them in

possession of their liberty? *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?* (Psal. xciv. 9.) And he that imparted to men all the powers, and all the means of intercourse with each other, shall he be debarred all intercourse and communication with them? We depend upon God for the preservation of our natural life: his presence and his power support us in our being; his arm upholds and strengthens us in every action; *in him we live, and move, and have our being.* (Acts xvii. 28.) Yet, notwithstanding this natural influence, perpetually issuing from the throne of God, we enjoy a perfect freedom, a liberty which we always can, and which we too often do, abuse to the purposes of sin. And, in like manner, though we are supported and assisted through the whole progress of our spiritual life, by those influences which perpetually flow from the throne of grace, we are still free, and at liberty (and too often use that liberty) to defeat them all, thereby rendering *sin itself more exceeding sinful.* (Rom. vii. 13.) And as the doctrine of divine preservation gives men no encouragement, in ordinary cases, to cast all their care upon God; as if he would feed them as he does *the fowls of the air, which neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns*, and, as if he would clothe them, as he does *the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin* (Matt. vi. 26, 28.); so neither should the doctrine of divine grace encourage them to rely solely upon that, as if every thing was to be wrought in them, and for them, without the least care or endeavours of their own. They, therefore, who pretend to expect assistance of such a kind, or in such a degree as destroys their natural liberty, and supersedes their own endeavours (which indeed is no assistance at all, but plain violence and force), and they who pretend to look for no assistance, but disclaim it all, under pretence, that it is inconsistent with liberty, and religion and virtue, are both equally to be condemned. The just temper, in this matter, seems to lie between these extremes, which at once ascribes to God the honour of his grace, and leaves to men the praise of doing well.

The restriction above mentioned re-

gards us, as we are men, and moral agents; there is another, which concerns us as Christians of those latter ages, in which Christianity is already planted, and the professors of it no longer exposed to persecution. And this will prevent us from deceiving ourselves by such promises (if any such there be), as had relation to times, which had need of more plentiful communications. As we are not now to expect the spiritual gifts, which enabled the Apostle to plant the gospel, so neither should we expect the spiritual consolations, which supported the martyr in his sufferings for it. These were favours peculiar to the times which wanted them; favours, which, because they never experienced, some men are too apt to disbelieve. But there is very little foundation for any doubt of this kind: for those great illapses of the Spirit, those raptures and illuminations, were vouchsafed to the primitive Christians, and are withheld from the present, for the same reason, and upon the same account; viz. because God gives his grace to help only in time of need, and in such proportion as is needful. Unless, therefore, our circumstances are the same, and our trials as severe, as were those of the first Christians, we have no reason to expect the same extraordinary, the same miraculous, influences of the Spirit. It is by the grace of God, that we are what we are; that we are men, and Christians, endued with liberty and reason, and have only the common trials and temptations of life to pass through: it seems, therefore, to follow, that we should only desire further, that God would be pleased to bless, direct, and assist us, in the common methods of his Providence, and give us such a portion of his good Spirit, as is agreeable to our nature, and suitable to the circumstances in which we are placed. But there is no reason in the nature of the thing, and no foundation in the word of God, for those strong impressions, those rapturous sensations of grace, those visions, and ecstasies, and illuminations, to which some have pretended. If men would not be imposed on in this affair, they ought to examine rather what they do, than what they feel; for inward feelings may be nothing else but the effects of a disordered head, or the workings of

a warm imagination. *But whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and he that doth righteousness, is righteous.* (1 John iii. 9. and v. 4. and iii. 7.) Yet there is no occasion, perhaps, after all, to confine the operations of the Spirit to one faculty, and to suppose that they are always, and only, addresses to the reason of men. For reason is not the part in our nature which wants chiefly to be restored. The great source of corruption lies in the appetites and the will; and it is not so much the weakness of reason, as the strength of concupiscence, that leads us into ruin. And therefore, to be a counterbalance to this force of concupiscence, which is the love of sensual good, it is by no means absurd to suppose, that the holy Spirit may draw men, by sensations of delight, to the love of that which is spiritual. Nor will this appear any infringement of our liberty, if it be considered, that our liberty is weakened and impaired by concupiscence; and that, therefore, there is need of this taste of pleasure to recover it, and restore us to its free and unrestrained use, with regard to spiritual objects. It is to little purpose how clear the light is, wherein we see our duty, if our hearts, through corruption, be insensible to the love of it; and consequently, if the influence of the Spirit be excluded here, it is excluded from that part of us, which seems chiefly to require his holy inspiration.

IV. Fourthly, The doctrine admitted under these restrictions, does not seem capable of being easily abused. But, in general, all uses have been, and ill uses may be, made of it again; which, therefore, it may not be inexpedient to point out. This doctrine, then, is grievously abused, when it is made to serve the purposes either of enthusiasm, or carelessness, or sin. And it is made to serve the purposes of enthusiasm, when, under pretext thereof, any persons pretend to such favours and communications from above, as Christians, in ordinary cases, have no reason to expect. And they may be sure, that all favours are of this kind, which are not absolutely needful, or at least, in a high degree, profitable to salvation. The natural reason of men, and

the written word of God, when rightly employed and used, are a sufficient guide to duty. All immediate inspirations, therefore, all new visions and revelations, as from the Lord, are enthusiastic pretences. But the most fatally pernicious pretence of this kind is, when men, under the influence of such persuasions, think themselves at liberty to dispense with the eternal rules of righteousness, and to contradict the plain express laws of the everlasting gospel. *This persuasion cometh not of him that hath called* (Gal. i. 8.) us, *this wisdom descendeth not from above*; but if there be any thing more than what is *earthly and sensual*, it is *devilish*. (James iii. 15.)

This doctrine of grace may moreover be abused to the purposes of carelessness and sloth; and it really is so, when, instead of exerting their own endeavours, men only wait for the influence of the Spirit, which will, sometime, they hope, convert them, as in a moment, without preparation, without prayer, without any diligence of their own. But they may as well expect, that the Holy Ghost should descend suddenly, as with the sound of a rushing mighty wind, as that he should convert them in this irresistible manner; and without their own care and endeavours, deliver them like them that dream. No, he imparts his grace, as it were, in number, weight, and measure; and to such as make a good use and improvement of those degrees of it which are already conferred upon them, more shall be given, till at length they have abundance.

But the vilest, the most ungrateful abuse, is made of this doctrine, when, under the cover of it, men justify, or at least excuse themselves, in the known practice of sin. This they do, either when they live in the habit of any vice, pretending that, as yet, they have not grace sufficient to resist it; or more professedly, when they *continue in sin, that grace may abound* (Rom. vi. 1.), may appear more glorious at last, in the victory over such confirmed and inveterate habits. This turning the grace of God into an argument for immorality, is sure the highest way of grieving that holy Spirit, who is the giver of it; and as to ourselves, is

making that which should have been for our wealth, become unto us an occasion of falling.

V. Fifthly, We make a good use of this doctrine, when we suffer it to answer those ends, which it seems in itself naturally calculated to promote. One of these is devotion, or application to God in prayer, and in all other methods, which he has appointed as the means of peace, or channels through which to convey it. Nothing is more destructive of true piety, than that affectation of self sufficiency, which destroys or interrupts the intercourse between God and us. And, by a contrary rule, whatever opens the way to a frequent communication with our Maker, whatever leads us to it, and encourages us in it, cannot but be a doctrine of great practical importance. Now it is plain, without any enlargement, that the doctrine of Divine Grace is of this kind. For this teaches us at once, that we can do nothing without the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and yet that this Spirit will not be given but to those that ask him; that ask him with earnestness and importunity, and seek him in diligent prayer. In like manner, and upon the same account, this doctrine must naturally excite us to make a regular and religious use of all the established means of grace. We cannot, with any consistency, neglect the study of the Scriptures, if we believe that a secret influence goes along with it, above what we have reason to expect from any human writings. We cannot, with any consistency, neglect the assemblies for Christian worship, if we believe that Christ himself is in the midst of them, distributing those favours of his gracious presence, which may elsewhere, perhaps be sought in vain. We cannot, with any consistency, neglect the Christian sacraments, if we believe, that besides the outward and visible signs, there is also an inward and spiritual grace; and particularly, that in the Lord's supper *our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine* (Church Catech.) And, in all probability, if we were to ask a reason of their conduct, from those persons who do neglect these things, such of them as are able to give one,

would allege, that they expect no advantage in the use of them. What are these ordinances, that we should keep them? or what profit is there, if we attend upon them?

The doctrine above explained has further a natural tendency to promote unfeigned humility. It is true, indeed, the sense of our having originally received all our powers and faculties from God, ought in reason to preserve us from the absurd vice of pride. For, if we received every endowment, and every excellence which we may imagine distinguishes us from other people, why do we boast, or why are we vain and proud, as though we had not received them? But still it is a further inducement to that most amiable virtue, which is the foundation of all the rest, and the very basis of all practical religion, to consider, moreover, that the free and right use of our faculties, is owing to a *secret* influence, which is as much the free gift, as much the grace of God, as even the original donation them. This persuasion, which sets our weakness and corruption so full before us, cannot but teach us to think of ourselves soberly, and as we ought to think. To all which it must be added, as an additional motive to this good disposition, that it is one of the conditions, without which we have little reason to hope, that the grace of God will be long continued. *For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

To conclude: The doctrine of Divine grace, when rightly understood, is so far from being an argument for negligence, or sloth, or continuance in sin, that it is a great and powerful encouragement to make us use our own endeavours towards universal obedience. For this informs us, that we are carrying on a work, in which God himself is engaged; and which therefore cannot fail of success, but through our fault. *It is God which worketh in us, and with us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,* (Phil. ii. 13.) and therefore we are inexcusable, if, under the eye and inspection of such an

assistant, we do not work out our own salvation. This consideration, as it may keep the most righteous persons from being confident, so it ought to preserve the *most* guilty from despair. For their very first attempts towards virtue, in their return from folly, will interest a power in their behalf, which, in spite of all opposition, will be sufficient for them: while they are yet afar off, their heavenly Father will meet them, and have compassion on them. But all this implies, that they have some power themselves to lay hold of the hand, which is thus graciously stretched out to relieve them. It implies, that they are not only able, but obliged to answer the end, for which the grace of God is bestowed upon them. And that is, not to render their own care superfluous, but effectual; not to supersede their own endeavours, but to make them successful. And when they thus labour, that they may not receive the grace of God in vain; when they hope to receive the Spirit, only that they may bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; when they strive to keep all God's commandments, and yet *do it as of the ability which God giveth* (1 Pet. iv. 11.); when they do the best they can, and yet put not their trust in any thing that they do; in short, when they take to themselves the blame of all that is amiss, and ascribe to God the glory of all that is good in them; then the doctrine of Divine grace has had its natural effect upon them, and wrought in them that *temper* of mind, which by the appointment and promise of God, entitles them to the kingdom of glory. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. v. 3.) There every heart will be sensible, and every tongue will confess, that this great salvation, so much beyond what they looked for, is principally and originally owing not to any works or merits of their own; but to the benevolence and mercy of God the Father, to the merits and mediation of God the Son, to the guidance and assistance of God the Holy Ghost.

S E R M O N XXII.

By MATTHEW HORBERY, D. D.

The Inspiration of the moral Parts of Scripture asserted.

2 TIM. iii. 16, 17.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

THE importance of the argument to which these words direct us, is evident from the necessity of Divine inspiration, to give a proper weight and authority to the records of our holy religion. For supposing it to be proved that there really is a revelation given by God to mankind, there is still a question to be satisfied, viz. Where is this revelation to be found? And if in answer to this, men be referred (as they must be referred) to the Scriptures; it may still farther be demanded, what security have we, that these Scriptures themselves are free from error? If we say, with the Apostle, that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*, one would think that when this point was once clear, nothing farther would be expected. He is equally exempt from the possibility of deceiving, and of being deceived; and his word, like himself, is light and truth, and in it is no falshood, or error at all.

But we seem not to receive the same complete satisfaction, as to this point, if we are only told, that some *part* indeed of the Scripture, (as prophecies and certain doctrines,) must be inspired; but as to other parts, consisting of history or morals, there is no need, and no evidence of inspiration: in one case, men wrote with great faithfulness, in the other, with a pious intention.

Thus account of the inspiration of the Holy Scripture seems in great measure to destroy what before had been built up; the inquirer is left to fluctuate in uncertainty; the sacred volumes will lose much of their veneration; the church of God, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone (Ephes. ii. 20), will be sorely shaken; and every

profane hand will be encouraged to take away piece after piece, till (to speak in allusion to the fate of the material temple) there will not be left one stone upon another.

The revival of these notions makes this subject as seasonable, as it is important; and though nothing new upon it will be expected by this learned audience, yet I trust their candor will indulge me, while I remind them of the old approved arguments, at a time when others are not ashamed to revive the old exploded objections. I propose, therefore,

First, to enquire into the meaning of these words of the Apostle; and then to assert and prove the doctrine delivered in them.

No one, I believe, that reads St. Paul's words without a comment, will easily mistake their meaning; or make any doubt, but that he here asserts the complete inspiration of the Old Testament at least, as it was that part of Scripture which *Timothy had known from a child*. The holy Scriptures, or the Scripture, in the mouth of a Jew, or (what is much the same) of one educated in the Jews' religion, and who had no difference with them upon this article, would certainly be understood to signify that collection of sacred writings which was then received, and constituted the canon of the Jewish church. That was the same then, which it is at this day; and therefore whatever difficulties critics may raise, about the time when this collection was made, or the persons concerned in making it; if St. Paul declares that the whole collection was given by inspiration, this point, as far as his authority prevails, seems to be sufficiently secured. And the reason of the case, at least, extends to the New Testament, a considerable part of which was likewise written before this epistle to Timothy; so that, in this view, we are assured that all the Scriptures, consisting of the Old and New Testament, were given by inspiration of God.

But though this seems to be the plain and natural meaning of the words, as they lie in our English bibles, yet if we consult some writers for the meaning of them, they will tell us, that it is only this; that

all Scripture, which is divinely inspired, is also profitable for the purposes hereafter mentioned. This interpretation, however, does some violence both to the words, and to the sense. *πᾶσα γραφή*, in all probability, signifies, collectively, the whole body of sacred Scripture; and numerous instances might be produced out of the New Testament, where *αὐτή* has this signification, and is of the same import with *ἁλς*. However, if it should here be understood distributively, it is still asserted that every Scripture, that is, every part of Scripture, is divinely inspired: though it is not so easy to comprehend how every part of Scripture, singly and by itself, is also profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. This is a character, which the whole system of the sacred writings deserve; and by all of them together these ends are sufficiently answered: but that every part alone is of such universal use, is singly able to perfect the man of God, and thoroughly to furnish him unto all good works, is a point neither clear in itself, nor easy to be proved.

If to avoid this difficulty it be said, that the meaning is, that all Scripture, which is divinely inspired, be it more or less, is, taken altogether, profitable for these purposes; it is to be farther observed, (and it is the main observation of all,) that the text will not admit of this rendering. For the words are not *πᾶσα γραφή διότιντος, ωρίλμος, &c.* as if *διότιντος* was part of the subject; but *πᾶσα γραφή διότιντος καὶ ωρίλμος, &c.* where the conjunctive particle is an effectual barrier against this sense, and plainly shews that *διότιντος* and *ωρίλμος* are equally predicated of the Scripture. But this meaning will be more readily admitted, when the proof is made out; and therefore I may proceed,

Secondly, To assert and prove this doctrine of the complete inspiration of the holy Scriptures.

Only it may be remembered first, that the controversy here is not with infidels, who deny all inspiration whatsoever, but with those, who deny, or doubt of, the inspiration of some parts only of Scripture: the debate is not about the being or

reality of inspiration, but the extent of it. Secondly, the point asserted is, that the writings of the Old and New Testament were, all of them, *given by inspiration of God*: not that the writers themselves were, at all times, and in all the actions of their lives, absolutely exempt either from error or sin. Any defects, therefore, either in their conduct, or their knowledge, upon other occasions, are nothing to the purpose. Thirdly, it is not intended, because it is not necessary, to plead for a verbal inspiration, or for the same degree of inspiration in all cases; but only that they were conducted by some extraordinary direction and assistance, which enabled them always, without danger of mistake or error, to answer the ends designed to be promoted by them.

Scripture is a miscellaneous composition; there are in it prophecies, and doctrines, and history, and morals. The inspiration of prophecy is allowed. St. Peter says plainly, that *prophecy came not in old time, (or at any time,) by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* (2 Pet. i. 21.) It has sometimes been pretended, that these words of St. Peter are an explanation of our text; and that all the Scripture meant by St. Paul, is only the prophecy of the Scripture, which St. Peter says was not of the private motion, or personal knowledge, of the prophet's own mind, but proceeded originally from the Holy Ghost. But this point likewise is given up by the writer I have now in view; who contends, that there is another part of Scripture, besides the prophetic, which must necessarily be inspired; and that is the part, which contains "certain doctrines, and commands, or injunctions, which reason could not trace out, but which, when revealed, appear to be perfectly agreeable to reason." By commands or injunctions, he cannot here be supposed to mean those, which relate to morality, because his avowed principle is, that all morality may be known by natural reason; and that revelation is not at all necessary to fix a rule of morality. Whether, therefore, he intends the two positive institutions of Christianity, or what

ever else his meaning may be, this seems plain enough, that he does not think the moral, any more than the historical, parts of Scripture were given by inspiration of God: "An honest man," says he, "may demand a proof, that moral truths and historical facts are the immediate effect of inspiration." The point, therefore, between us is reduced to this, whether the histories, and the morals of the Scripture, were given by inspiration?

That the moral part of Scripture was inspired, seems evident, in the first place, from the text: *All Scripture*, says the Apostle, *was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*; where interpreters both ancient and modern understand the whole compass both of faith and practice, referring the two first to error, or truth, of doctrine, and the two last to viciousness, or integrity of life. But determine as you please as to the exactness of this distinction, it is plain the Apostle sets the moral Scriptures, upon the same foot with the doctrinal, and stamps them equally with the same character of divine inspiration. The man of God (whether that signifies the able minister, or only the pious Christian) cannot be perfect by faith only; nor can the speculative, exclusive of the moral, doctrines of Scripture, thoroughly furnish him unto all good works. But this point need not be rested upon the authority of this passage alone; it will appear from many considerations of reason, and from many other authorities of Scripture.

The great usefulness of moral doctrine, and its vast importance to mankind, will not be questioned. *The end of the commandment is charity* (1 Tim. 1. 5.); the end of all teaching, of all instruction, of all revelation itself, by this author's own account, is virtuous practice. Suppose a system of doctrines revealed from heaven, and a long series of prophecy given by inspiration of God; what purpose do they serve? and what end were they designed to promote? They were not given for their own sake, for the sake only of being given; say then, they were given for the interest of true religion. But what is true religion without true virtue? This is the great end of all God's deal-

ings with mankind; the great design of that last and best dispensation of the gospel, which is that *grace of God that bringeth salvation, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) Is it then reasonable to suppose, that less care should be taken of the end than of the means? Can we imagine, that when a rule of faith is revealed by divine wisdom, a rule of life (of equal importance at least) should be left entirely to the discoveries, or the deductions, of human reason? Shall a Prophet be sent from God, in an extraordinary manner, to declare his will on special emergencies and on particular occasions? and shall it seem a thing incredible with you, that Prophets should be sent to declare that whole will of God, which is of universal use and concernment, which is the standing law and rule of life, and which to know and to practise is the perfection of human nature?

There seems to be something in this way of reasoning, which cannot well be evaded, but by saying that divine inspiration, which is necessary in one case, is needless in the other. Prophecies, and doctrines of pure revelation, must come from God in this extraordinary manner; but morality, if it be important, is also easy; is founded in truth and nature, may be traced out by reason, is commonly known, and what God has given us sufficient powers ourselves to discover; and it is neither usual, nor necessary, for God to interpose in cases, for which he has, in his ordinary providence, sufficiently provided.

The foundation of this reasoning proceeds upon a maxim which, as it is often applied, is good for nothing. It is not necessary, you say, that God should give us rules of morality, by way of inspiration? And what then? If it be not necessary, it may be serviceable, it may be beneficial, to his creatures. And does God do nothing, but what is necessary? Is this an amiable idea of the Sovereign Goodness? This, which seems rather derived from the conduct of indigent and frugal mortals, than to suit with the exuberant beneficence and riches of the divine nature? And what instance is

there of any thing, pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. i. 3.), in which God has not done much more than was necessary, even abundantly more than we could either ask, or think? (Ephes. iii. 20.)

But if this should go for nothing, it is farther to be observed, that it might be necessary, (necessary for some purposes, though not for others), that the moral parts of Scripture should be given by inspiration. In this way there is an authority stamped upon them, which otherwise they would want. There are but two ways of teaching morality to any considerable purpose: it must be done in the way of authority, or by demonstration. It is plain, that how capable soever morality may be in itself of demonstration, it is not demonstrated in Scripture. If then you take away that divine authority on which it is supposed to stand, what else do you leave to support it? What weight or influence will the moral precepts of the bible have, if once they come to be considered only in this light, as so many moral sentences of wise men? Would the ten commandments, for instance, be equally regarded, and so effectually engage our obedience to them, if they were supposed to be the words only of a man wholly uninspired? Yet one would think it was not impossible, that so great a law-giver as Moses, so learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts, vii. 22.), might have been able to do something of this kind himself. Nevertheless, we see this matter was not left to him, but God wrote them himself with his own finger upon two tables of stone. (Exod. xxiv. 12. xxxi. 18. xxxii. 15, 16.) But this is too plain to be insisted on.

It must farther be said, and it has often been proved by many writers, that a complete rule of life is not easily, if at all, discoverable by mere reason. And from some passages even of our author himself it should appear, that morality is a science of considerable difficulty; how much soever he may contend, on other occasions, that it is all knowable by natural reason. Our moral ideas are not innate, any more than any other; "the knowledge of good morals," says he, "is not born in every, or any man."—"But men come at the knowledge of

morality, just as they do at the knowledge of other things, by being taught." But who shall teach them? Those, one would think, should be best qualified to do it, who had made this branch of knowledge their particular study. But the misfortune is, that when this science was most cultivated, it became most intricate and perplexed, by the disputes and differences of the philosophers themselves.

When Socrates had diverted their attention, which had almost wholly been confined to the study of nature, to a subject which more nearly concerned them, there rose up sect after sect, contradicting and confuting each other: differing about the very end, the chief happiness of man, and by consequence differing about the means that lead to it. What method then shall the disciple prefer, when the masters themselves are all at variance? and what way shall the inquirer take, when each of his guides gives him a different direction? "Has not every principle of morality, says our author, been as much the subject of debate and difference, as the precepts or doctrines of revelation have? Has not the existence of God; the liberty of man; the nature of good and evil; what is happiness; what is it that thinks in us; whether the soul be immaterial or not, immortal or not; the nature of justice, moral honesty; in short, every point of morality or natural religion, been controverted?"

It should seem, then, that there is some darkness and difficulty in this subject; and if God may in any degree remove it, by inspiring men to deliver the doctrines of morality in a plain authoritative manner, it should seem also that this is a design, not unworthy of so wise and gracious a Being. If the rule of life be truth, it is not easy for every man, or any man, to find out the whole truth; which consists not in any particular circumstance, relation, or habitude of things, but in all of them put together. If it be founded in the nature of things, or in the relations which intelligent beings stand in to one another; are all these discoverable, and easily discoverable, even by men of the best abilities? And if this truth of things be, (as it is allowed to be) the same in effect, with the

nature and will of God, *canst thou by searching find out God*, his nature and will? *Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection*: (Job xi. 7.)

But supposing that all morality may be known by natural reason, and that a great progress was made in this science by the philosophers of Greece and Rome; we are still to remember, that the Scripture-morals came from another kind of men, in a secluded corner of the earth. What was there peculiar in the soil of Judea, that the purest and most genuine fruits should flourish there? How comes it to pass, that all antiquity has delivered down to us but one book that is free from all blemish or defect? And yet this book was compiled by various authors, at very distant periods of time: still all is consistent, all is uniform, all breathes the same spirit, all conspires to the same end: and though running, as it were, in various streams, through different soils and channels, yet it preserves its native purity amidst all the pollution that surrounds it; and thence discovers that the source it proceeds from, is the *fountain of living waters*. But what consistency is there in the Pagan moralists, compared with one another? What immortality is there not, considered in themselves? Do not some or other of them encourage self-murder, the practice of exposing children, fornication, uncleanness, and even the sin not to be named? And do not all of them offend most grievously against the first principle and duty of natural religion, the unity and worship of the one true God, by directing men to comply with the idolatry and superstitions of their country? Is any thing like this to be found in the Bible, though the Hebrew Scriptures were written while that nation in general were very prone to idolatry?

It is certain and evident matter of fact, that we cannot take any number (hardly any one) of the Pagan moralists, against whose doctrines, in some parts or other, there will not lie very great exceptions. But nothing of this kind appears in the Scripture morals; nothing, but what fairly understood is capable of a just vindication: so that from the very purity and superior excellency of them one would imagine, that they were drawn up under a conduct more than human. It is true,

indeed, they are not formed into a regular system, according to the rules of art practised by men. And in this sense what our author says may be true, "that nothing equal to the ethics of Tully, or Aristotle, was wrote for the first sixteen centuries of Christianity." But then, the purity of moral doctrine does not at all depend upon the exactness of method in which it is delivered; the systems of these two great men, with all their art and order, were as beneficial perhaps to the common people of Greece and Rome, as the Religion of Nature delineated is to the common people of England. While the Gospel reformed the world, and neglecting the rules of artificial method, and the *enticing words of man's wisdom* (1 Cor. ii. 1.), converted the hearts and renewed the spirits of men, *turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* (Acts xxvi. 18.); then indeed the Pagan moral, though it endeavoured to serve itself of the gospel, sunk into neglect, eclipsed by the superior lustre of the Christian: cold and languid were its precepts to a heart inflamed with the love of a dying Redeemer, and an empty lifeless form it appeared, void of all strength and beauty, to those first and most faithful disciples of the cross, *before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified among them*, (Gal. iii. 1.) Pagan morality is little more than a shell and a carcass, for want of an inward principle to animate and inform it. This mere body may derive its origin from the earth, as the first man's from the dust of the ground; but the inspiration of the Almighty is *the breath of life*, by which it becomes a *living soul*.

These considerations may be of some weight; but to draw this matter to a point, we must attend to the sacred writings themselves, and the testimony they bear to one another. The sacred writings were, for the most part, compiled by men, who it is granted were inspired upon some occasions; and the moral parts of them lie mingled and intermixed with other matters, which were allowedly given by inspiration of God. Thus, as to Moses and the Prophets for the Old Testament, they were inspired in their prophecies; and can we think that this

inspiration immediately forsook them, whenever they begun to deliver or inculcate the rules of morality? They wrote these things at the same time, and in the same page. And is it reasonable to suppose, they were inspired this moment, and left to themselves the next? and then perhaps inspired again the moment after that, in order to foretell some future event? Is not prophesying, in the other sense of that word, as it signifies to declare the will of God, the standing law and rule of life, as useful and as noble an office, as predicting things to come? And why then should not the Holy Spirit be thought equally to provide for both cases, and to prevent any false prophesying in either sense? Besides, any one may see that the prophets themselves make no distinction in this matter, but deliver their moral instructions as they do their predictions, in the name, and by the authority of God, with a—*Thus saith the Lord*, and, *Hear the word of the Lord*. Then as to the other class of writings in the Old Testament, which are chiefly, or only, of a moral nature: they were either composed by men, who are known to have had some extraordinary intercourse with Heaven, or at least, they were always received by the Jewish church, as drawn up under a divine influence; and they appear to be quoted under that character by Christ and his Apostles in like manner as they quote the other Scriptures.

David does not only say of himself—*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue* (2 Sam. xxiii. 2.); but Christ also, the son of David, plainly intimates the same thing: *How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?* (Mat. xxii. 43.) And having occasion to quote to the Jews a passage from the Psalms, he tells them, that it was written in their law. (John xv. 25.) And when, after his resurrection, he expounded to his disciples in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself, he tells them, in conclusion, *that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him.* (Luke xxiv. 27, 44.) St. Peter says expressly, that *David was a prophet* (Acts ii. 30.); and in a Psalm of imprecation, which has of-

ten been the mark of prophane reproach, he declares *the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David.* (Acts i. 16, 20.) St. Paul has many allegations from the Psalms, too numerous to be repeated; argues from them in the same manner as he does from the Scriptures of the Prophets, and lays an equal stress upon their authority*. St. Paul, in more places than one, alleges the book of Proverbs, and St. James in one place seems plainly to ascribe, what is said there, to God himself. These Apostles likewise bear testimony to the book of Job, and the last recommends it, together with the Prophets, *who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example, of suffering affliction, and of patience.* (1 Cor. iii. 19. Jam. v. 10, 11.) But there is the less occasion to be solicitous about every particular book in the Old Testament, since St. Paul has confirmed the authority of them all, not only in the words of the text, but also when he tells us, that *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* (Rom. xv. 4.) Every one in St. Paul's time understood by the Scriptures a system of writings that claimed to come from God. And would he have countenanced this claim, by such a passage as this, unless he had thought, that it was justly founded; and that these Scriptures, through patience and comfort of which we might have hope, did really come from the *God of patience and consolation?* (Rom. v. 5.)

As to the inspiration of St. Paul himself, no one, that calls himself a Christian, can with any consistency deny it. His pretensions to it are so frequent, and so plain, that if he had it not, he must have been a grand impostor. He declares, that the gospel he preached was

* See the following passages, viz. Rom. iii. 4, 10, &c. iv. 6, 7, 8. viii. 36. 10. 18. xi. 9 10. xv. 3. 9. 11. 1 Cor. iii. 20. xv. 25. 17. 2 Cor. ix. 9. Ephes. v. 8. Heb. i. 5, to the end of the chapter. Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8, 12, 13. iiii. 7, 8, 9, &c. iv. 3, 5, 7. v. 5. 6. vii. 17. 21. x. 5, 6, &c. xiii. 6. It seems clear from these passages, that St. Paul did not consider the Psalms of David as a Book of Songs, that had nothing of prophetic in them. See *Five Letters concerning Inspiration*, &c. p. 103.

not after man, that he conferred not about it with flesh and blood, or with any of the other Apostles, *neither received he it of any man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (Gal. i.) What could this gospel be, which was the subject of St. Paul's preaching, but the same which is the subject of his writings? The whole scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, the privileges and the conditions of the gospel-covenant, the doctrine of justification, though not by the works of the law, either natural or Jewish, yet by a *faith that worketh by love* (Gal. v. 6.), that comprehends all Christian morality, and is the root and foundation of all Christian obedience. This gospel he received *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*, and this gospel he preached *with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.* (Peter i. 12.): *which things* (says he, joining himself with the other Apostles), *we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.* (1 Cor. ii. 13.) It is very unreasonable then to suppose, that he did not write, as well as preach, this doctrine, under the same divine conduct and direction. Indeed the very character of his writings themselves allow us not room to doubt of it. For they abound with prophecies and doctrines of mere revelation and doctrines that are themselves a sort of prophecies; as are all those that relate to the future state of Christ's church, his second advent, the rise of anti-christ, and the like. So that here, to borrow our author's own observation, "the events, which we see in the world, establish the credit of the Apostle, and prove that he had some intercourse with Heaven; they prove that he was actually inspired." But, then,

We are reminded in another place, that there are some things in the Epistles, which are spoken without any commandment from the Lord, in which the apostles gave their judgment; and here it seems we have no authority to say, that they did it by inspiration.

The case here referred to, though expressed in this general manner, is only that of St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. where, supposing all to be true which this writer suspects, it only shews, that in a particular point of present expediency, about

which the Apostle had been consulted, he had received no immediate direct command from Heaven. This exception, in this particular case, is so far from hurting his general claim to inspiration, that it strengthens it; it shews the honesty of this Apostle, and his care not to obtrude any thing upon the church, under the stamp of divine authority, which really wanted that impression. But, after all, the matter may be wholly mistaken; and the opposition may lie, not between St. Paul and himself, as sometimes writing by inspiration, and sometimes not; but between what St. Paul determined in the then present distress, and the commands delivered by our Lord himself while he was here on earth, obliging all Christians in all ages of the world. And as to this Apostle's saying, in the conclusion of the chapter, *and I think also, that I have the spirit of God*, it intimates no distrust, that he himself had of his inspiration; but is a fine, and at the same time a severe, rebuke to some certain persons in the church of Corinth, who seem to have been as cautious in this affair of inspiration, as some certain teachers now in our's. But to all such teachers St. Paul said then, and to all such now his words may be applied, *If a man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the things I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord.* (1 Cor. xiv. 37.)

With regard to the other Apostles who wrote any part of the New Testament, we must remember, that, according to our Lord's most true promise, they were *filled with the Holy Ghost*, who *guided them into all truth, taught them all things, and brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them.* (John, xiv. 26. xvi. 13.) St. Mark and St. Luke indeed were not of this number, but the reason of the case extends to them; and there is no cause to think, that in that miraculous age, when there was so plentiful an effusion of the spirit, these men should be left wholly to themselves in compiling those writings, which are of perpetual use and benefit to the church. Indeed, as both the Jewish and Christian religion are founded upon facts, it seems a sort of inconsistency in the divine conduct, that the Historians, who record

these facts, should be left exposed to all the mistakes and inconveniences of human frailty. God himself was the King of the Jews in a peculiar manner, and the history of that church and nation is in effect the history of his government. And therefore it seems not at all wonderful, that men raised up by his providence, should be guided by his spirit, to record, as it were, the actions of his own reign.

But I have been too tedious already to engage in this point at present; let me only say, that from the character of the persons who wrote these histories, as far as these authors can be known; from the character they have always borne in the Jewish, and in the Christian church; and from the countenance given to this character by our Lord and his Apostles; it should seem, that they are of a class far superior to any human writings. Jews as well as Christians have had other historians who wrote with great faithfulness, as well as other moralists, who wrote with a pious intention; yet we see these qualifications did not advance them to the same high rank with the other, nor are their compositions reckoned a part of the sacred volume. It must be want of acquaintance with the Scriptures, or prejudice against them, that hinders us from subscribing to this judgment of antiquity. For to a mind duly disposed to study them, they discover their origin by their own intrinsic excellence. They may not be all of the same usefulness and dignity; nor are any other of the works of God; but in this, as in other respects, resemble the lights of heaven; where though *one star differeth from another star in glory*, yet *they all declare the glory of God*, and proclaim the omnipotence and the wisdom of him that made them.

SERMON XXIII.

By GLOUCESTER RIDLEY, LL.B.

The Divinity and Personality of the HOLY GHOST asserted from the New Testament.

ACTS, XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the

upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism.

ST. PAUL, set apart to the ministry by the spirit of God, and by him directed and assisted in the discharge of it, applies himself with all diligence to the work; as occasions required, preaching the gospel (Acts, xiv. 21.); strengthening the disciples (Acts, xviii. 23.); ordaining elders (Acts, xiv. 23.); confirming the churches (Acts, xv. 41.); and publishing the apostolical decrees (Acts, xvi. 4.) When he met with disciples, to whose proficiency he was a stranger, the text informs us what method this skilful apostle took to let himself readily into a knowledge of it, in order to address himself the most properly to their necessities. The cardinal question with him was, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* But how astonished was he to hear the answer of these supposed Christians at Ephesus, *We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost!* Supposing them Christians, lately converted, as St. Paul apprehended, such ignorance was not to be accounted for: instruction in this point being of the very essence and first rudiments of their religion; *Unto what then*, says he, *were ye baptized?* They inform him, that they had never received Christ's baptism, only that of John. This sufficiently solved the difficulty, and pointed out to the apostle what was necessary for these Ephesian disciples, which he accordingly supplies by baptism. (Acts, xvi. 5, 6.) and imposition of hands.

This passage of scripture will naturally lead us to observe, 'That a knowledge of the Holy Ghost is essential to Christianity,' as of one to whom we are consecrated at our baptism, and as an article of that faith required of every man before he be admitted to that sacrament. When the Ephesians tell St. Paul, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, he immediately asks, *unto what then were ye baptized?* We learn far-

ther, 'That it is not sufficient for a Christian barely to have a speculative knowledge or faith in the Holy Ghost, but also that he receive him : ' *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* Which will open to an enquiry 'into the expediency and necessity of receiving him,' which is of so great importance that St. Paul makes it his leading question in order to judge of the true state and proficiency of these Ephesian disciples. And this will fitly afford an occasion of considering 'the means by which the Holy Ghost is usually dispensed to us,' of which we have here some information, *They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them. Points which our divinely instructed Apostle thought of the utmost importance to Christianity, and therefore never unseasonable from a Christian teacher : points immediately flowing from that mysterious truth, which this lecture was intended to inculcate, and therefore not foreign to the occasion of my appearing here at this time : and as the learning of my predecessors has omitted nothing which relates to the other branch of this doctrine, viz. the second person of the ever blessed Trinity, it becomes the most proper business of their successor to apply himself to this less cultivated province : and I wish I could not add, that the carelessness of many supposed Christians, sinking them almost into the state of the Ephesian disciples, of not knowing whether there be any Holy Ghost, and the unwholesome remedies which mistaken zeal has applied to reform this evil, have made an attempt of this kind now particularly necessary. I shall therefore endeavour to inform the ignorant, and satisfy the perplexed Christian in the four following points ;

I. That there is an Holy Ghost ; wherein I shall endeavour to state the scripture doctrine of his essence and personality.

II. In what manner he is received ; and how we may know whether we have received him or not.

III. To what ends the receiving of him is necessary. And,

IV. The means by which we may receive him.

In treating of which, may the Blessed Spirit, who is the subject of them, so cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by his gentle inspiration, that all carnal affections being subdued, they may be open to receive his light and truth, in the sober use of those means which he has appointed, prayer, (James, i. 5.) and the word of God ! (John, 5, 39.)

First I shall shew that there is an Holy Ghost, and endeavour to state the scripture doctrine of his essence and personality.

Spirit, or in old British, Ghost, is a name of kind, taken in scripture rather negatively, in opposition to what it is not, than defining what it is ; as, *a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have* (Luke xxiv. 39.) : and it is likewise distinguished from the animal soul and flesh, as by St. Jude, *sensual* [or animal] *having not the Spirit*. Wherefore it would be a great mistake to ascribe to the Holy Ghost such effects and operations, as owe themselves only to the flesh or animal life. To these it is really opposed ; but it is called a Spirit only by a metaphor or analogy, as the nearest approach which the grossness of our ideas, the types of sensible objects, can make to the true nature of it. Its subtility, and activity, mighty in its effects, but indiscernible in its operation, are the points of comparison ; and therefore applied to God, and to angels whether good or evil, and to the human or rational soul. But when applied to these, it would be absurd to understand the word in its strict and proper signification, so as to infer the same qualities, properties, and effects in them, as in the air or wind itself. If God, for his powerful and boundless energy be called a spirit, and be described as *flying upon the wings of the wind*, (Ps. xviii. 10.) yet would it be strange divinity to infer from thence an inconstancy and changeableness in him, *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. (James i. 17.) *If he maketh his angels spirits*, (Heb. i. 7.) *sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation*, (Heb. i. 14.) the revelation, which tell us so, would be of little use, should we argue from thence, that their voice was delusive and unmeaning as the echo, repeating nothing but

what ourselves first gave out; that they were in this respect *become wind* also, and *the word was not in them*. (Jer. v. 13.) So again the human soul, itself undiscerned, yet discovered by its effects, when we *hear the sound thereof* in the voice of reason, is called *the spirit that is in man*, (Job, xxxii. 8.) as it *blows where it listeth*, (John iii. 8.) because we cannot command it to animate what mass we please, and *know not whence it cometh or whither it goeth*; but to stretch the comparison farther than the points of similitude intended, would lead us to that false conclusion of the ungodly, that we shall be hereafter as though we had never been, because *the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air*. (Wisd. ii. 2, 3.) As it hath pleased God to convey the knowledge of heavenly things to us only by the mediation of sensible objects, we must remember, that these sensible objects are but types and characters of what they signify, and not the things themselves; wherefore as the resemblance is not universal, the application should be limited; and not carried farther than scripture warrants, nor ever be interpreted literally, only by analogy: otherwise the wildest fancies and grossest conceits may be advanced as true divinity, if we will admit for such, all the conclusions which a lively imagination may extract from metaphor.

After having guarded against these grosser errors which rise from a confusion of kind, we may proceed to distinguish this spirit more particularly from all others, to which the name is common, by the character annexed, the Holy Ghost. It is therefore very different from the spirit that is in man, which was so disordered by the fall of Adam, that far from communicating holiness for the sanctifying of others, it has none inherent in itself, but *every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually*. (Gen. vi. 5.) And still more so is it from those spirits or angels whose character is directly opposite to this, and who are called *evil angels*, (Psal. lxxviii. 49.) *foul*, (Mark, ix. 25.) *unclean spirits*. (Mat. x. 1.) It remains then that this Holy Ghost is either one of the good angels, or the spirit and substance of God himself.

How immense soever the distance may be betwixt creature and creator, yet the soul of man is so inconveniently situated, as not easily to discern it through the interposition of the senses. If we usually take our accounts of the sun, not by his real appearance in the heavens, but by the shadows which he casts among us; how much more when we would *search out God, who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto*, (1 Tim. vi. 16.) must we be sent to judge of him by the dusky mediums that intervene? If *the invisible things of him are clearly seen*, (Rom. i. 20.) yet it is no otherwise than as they are *understood by the things that are made*. Right reason can proceed safe enough by making due use of the index, yet denying any exact resemblance; but imagination is apt to perplex us, by always representing the medium, and confounding the properties of the sign with the thing signified; and by mistaking these indices for just representations. Sceptics deny all divine truths, and bigots believe any absurdity. When God would exhibit himself to *Elijah*, and signify his power and anger against the impieties of Ahab and Jezebel, a great and strong wind rent the mountains, (1 Kings, xix. 11, 12.) after that came an earthquake, and after that a fire; yet the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire: so if God be called a spirit or a fire, we must not expect to find the real essence or attributes of God in those symbols; for they are both of them creatures: whence it must be great rashness to infer or conclude strictly from the symbols, as it will endanger either our faith, or our reason, and lead to infidelity or a blind credulity. In the point before us, the term itself will not discover to us, whether the spirit spoken of, be the divine nature to which it is sometimes applied analogically, or whether it be a created substance, which it signifies properly. In order to discover this, we must search the scriptures, which alone can inform us what are the appropriate characters which distinguish God and the creature; and which of these characters are applied to the Holy Ghost. The divine nature is set forth to us, 1. by incommunicable attributes which flow from, and declare his essence: 2. by works

which testify those attributes, and which are impossible for creatures to perform: and 3. by an appropriate honour which is the creature's acknowledgment of him.

1. The incommunicable attributes, which flow from and declare his essence, are principally these; Omniscience, Omnipresence, Eternity, and Omnipotence. These cannot agree with the limited perfections of a creature, and are the scripture characters of God, whose *understanding is infinite*; (Psal. cxlvii. 5.) *the fulness which filleth all in all*; (Eph. i. 23.) *which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*. (Rev. i. 8.) The spirit then to which these attributes are given in scripture is God. But these are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, the spirit which *searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God?* (1 Cor. ii. 10.) which *leadeth unto all truth*, (John xvi. 13.) and is therefore called the *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*. (Eph. i. 17.) He is the very argument and testimony of God's Omnipresence, *who dwelleth in us* how widely soever dispersed and scattered *by his spirit*. (1 John iv. 13.) He is called the *eternal spirit*; (Heb. ix. 14.) and though this text should be thought rather to signify the divine nature which was in Christ, than point to the Holy Ghost mentioned in the text, yet we cannot but conceive Him eternal whom we read of *moving upon the waters*, ere time began, before the *evening and the morning made the first day*, (Gen. i. 2.) and who *shall abide for ever*. (John xiv. 16.) Nor can he be otherwise than Omnipotent, who is *the finger of God*, (Luk. xi. 20. compared with Math. xii. 28.) and *the power of the Highest*. (Luk. i. 35.) If any expect abatement to be made for these poetical expressions, as owing themselves to the oriental grandeur, I must observe, so far from that, that on the other side allowances must be made for the poverty of language, which saints beneath the weight of that truth, it was intended to carry: which will appear by appealing,

2. To the works peculiar to God, and which are testimonies of his attributes. Thus St. Paul tells us, *His eternal power and godhead are clearly seen from the creation of the world*; (Rom. i. 20.) and God challenges it solely to himself

without the aid or ministry of others; *I am the Lord that maketh all things, and stretcheth forth the heavens alone*. (Is. xlv. 24.) Yet by his word were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the spirit of his mouth, (Psal. xxxiii. 6.) and by his spirit he garnished the heavens. (Job, xvi. 13.) So again it was God who *breathed into man the breath of life*, (Gen. ii. 7.) in whom we live, move, and have our being. (Acts, xvii. 28.) Yet holy Job tells us, that the spirit of God made him, and the breath of the Almighty gave him life. (Job, xxxiii. 4.) The divine power which (Rom. i. 4.) raised up Christ from the dead was the spirit of holiness, and who likewise shall *quicken our mortal bodies*, (Rom. viii. 11.) and the miracles which none can do except God be with him, (Joh. iii. 2.) are the gifts, (1 Cor. ii. 4.) and demonstration of the Spirit. (1 Cor. xii. 4. 10.) From his omniscience he is enabled to *teach all things* (Joh. xiv. 26.); and from his omnipresence, to accompany the apostles, and give them power to be witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts, i, 8.)

3. When God's attributes are proved from his works, he expects man's acknowledgment of his divinity by a peculiar honour, which honour he will not give or allow to another. (Is. xli. 8.) Such are religious invocation and address; consecrating ourselves to his service by baptism; benediction in his name; and dedicating temples to him. Yet this honour we are allowed to pay to the Holy Ghost, but to no created power whatever. Thus our Saviour directs us, *Pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into the harvest*. (Mat. ix. 38.) But the Holy Ghost is the lord of the harvest; it was he that *separated Paul and Barnabas* (Acts, xiii. 2.); whose office in general it is to appoint overseers over the flock to feed the church of God (Acts, xx. 28.); and who is expressly mentioned as the lord of the harvest in this text by St. Luke, who tells us, as the most ancient MSS. read, that Christ chose the apostles through or by the Holy Ghost. And he only can be that third person distinct from the Father and the Son to whom St. Paul

prays in both his epistles to the Thessalonians, *That the Lord would make them increase and abound in love, to the end he might establish their hearts in holiness before God even the Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And again, *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* (1 Thes. iii. 12, 13. 2 Thes. iii. 5.) The Lord here addressed to is neither the Father, nor the Son, and is sufficiently pointed out to be the Holy Ghost, as the author of love and of holiness. Another instance of this honour is renouncing all other gods, and solemnly dedicating ourselves to the service of the true God, by being baptized into his name; an honour which St. Paul seems as fearful lest any should ascribe to him, as the angel in the Apocalypse lest St. John should worship him (Rev. xxii. 9.); and blesses God that he had baptized two only, *lest any should say that he baptized in his own name* (1 Cor. i. 15.); yet this baptism is appointed to be equally in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 19.); and being then adopted by the Spirit, and born of the Spirit, we thereby become the sons of God. Another branch of religious worship is blessing: for this purpose the tribe of Levi was separated to stand before the Lord and to bless in his name. (Deut. x. 8.) When St. John wrote to the seven churches in Asia, he wishes them *grace and peace not only from Him who was, and is, and is to come, but also from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ* (Rev. i. 4.): where the number regards not a multiplicity of persons, but the manifold graces of the Holy Ghost. In which manner St. Paul blessed his Corinthians long before; *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.* (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) The fourth instance of religious honour was consecrated temples, which is always done either to the true, or to a falsely reputed God. And the true God reckons the building or making temples to others, as a forsaking of him. *Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples.* (Hos. viii. 14.) But our bodies

are the temples of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. vi. 19.) And St. Paul avows the consequence, exhorting to flee fornication, lest we defile our bodies, *for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* (1 Cor. iii. 17.) From these arguments, and more of the like nature, we should certainly be led to infer that the Holy Ghost is no other than the Divine Spirit, very God. And that we should be safe in such an inference appears from this, that the divinely instructed apostles themselves have often made it before us. Because the Holy Ghost dwells in us, therefore our bodies are the temples of God. St. Peter informs us that *Prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* (2 Pet. i. 21.) But St. Paul tells us that this Holy Ghost was God. *For all scripture, says he, is given by inspiration of God* (2 Tim. iii. 16.); and it was *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.* (Heb. i. 1.) Which justifies the conclusion generally drawn from the passage in the Acts, where the case of Ananias and Sapphira is related, *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* (Acts, v. 3, 4.) Nay the very incommunicable name Jehovah is frequently ascribed to him by the evangelical writers. We are informed in the pentateuch that the Lord (יהוה) spake unto Moses, saying, *Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them; according to all that I shew thee, even so shall ye make it.* (Exod. xxv. 1, 8, 9.) St. Paul referring to this, says, that Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle according to the pattern shewed him; which pattern he informs was typical, a figure for the time present, *the Holy Ghost, signifying thereby such and such truths.* (Heb. viii. 5. comp. with Heb. ix. 9. See also Heb. viii. 10. comp. with Heb. x. 16.) And to mention no more, in the 6th of Isaiah, the prophet represents the Lord (Jehovah) *sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above stood the seraphim, and one cried unto the other and said, Holy, holy, holy, Lord*

God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. And Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? then said I, here am I, send me. And he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not, &c. (Isaiah, vi. 1, 2, 3, 8.) There is no question made, but that this is the true God: yet here we have an intimation of a plurality in his essence, in the 8th verse. *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* and a farther intimation in the 3d verse, that this plurality is a Trinity, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!* And agreeably to these intimations those inspired commentators, St. John and St. Luke, include the second and third persons of the Trinity in this idea of the *Lord God of Hosts*; the first ascribing the glory then seen to the Son (John, xii. 41.); and the latter, in his history of the Apostles, ascribing the words to the Holy Ghost. (Acts, xxviii. 25.)

If then that spirit, to which divine incommunicable attributes, works, honour, and names are ascribed, is God; and if divine revelation be the proper evidence from whence only we can receive information in this point, how can we conclude otherwise than that the Holy Ghost is God? Will it be said the evidence has been tampered with, and corrupted by the Catholics? Yet here the various copies, versions, and additions agree, abundantly sufficient to support the premises. Will they say the conclusion is illogical? Yet the first Christians, who are likely to be the best interpreters of Scripture, were fully in the belief of it; future synods and councils found no cause to censure their faith in this article, but established it by their suffrages and decrees; may the one half of our adversaries the Sabellians and Socinians have allowed it: only Arius and Macedonius, with such as fight from their tents, have had courage enough to encounter those arguments, and attack the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The others infer it so necessarily, as to persuade themselves, that he is no other than the very person of the Father, considered under a different mode of acting; or that he is a quality or energy of the divine nature. But this is an error as

little countenanced in scripture, as that which would degrade him into the rank of creatures, for from thence we learn that the Holy Ghost has a personal subsistence, and is therefore more than a quality or energy of the divine nature; and that this personal subsistence is distinct from the person of the Father, and also of the Son.

Thus, to know and to will are personal properties; but these are affirmed of the Holy Ghost. *The things of God knoweth no person but the spirit of God,* ὁ θεὸς ἡ πνεύμα. (1 Cor. ii. 11.) And, *all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will,* (1 Cor. xii. 11.) And agreeably hereto he is represented as *decreeing* (Acts xv. 28.), as *appointing to the ministry* (Acts, xiii. 2.), as *speaking* (John, xvi. 13.), as *giving* (1 Cor. xii. 7.), and as *witnessing* (John, xv. 26.); he is also said to *come* (John, xvi. 13.), to *dwell* (Rom. viii. 9. 11.), to *be resisted* (Acts, vii. 51.), and the like, which with many more, naturally lead to the Catholic belief that the spirit thus characterised must be a person. And indeed Sabellius is consistent enough; for, as from the former arguments he acknowledges the Holy Ghost to be God, so from these he acknowledges him to be a person, no other than the person of God the Father. But the opinion of the Socinians finds no countenance here; a chief master in that school first lays down as a principle, that the Holy Ghost is a mere quality, neither a person nor a substance, for these two reasons; 1. Because he is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ, therefore it is not a person itself, but only the quality of a person: and, 2dly, because it is elsewhere called the power of God, which is a mere quality, and we ought not without great and sufficient cause to leave the propriety of words, and explain them in an improper sense. But it has been already seen, that in divine subjects we cannot conclude strictly from the primary or proper signification of the terms. 2dly, I observe, that the Jews (and to them, and by them, was the revelation made) had other ideas of those terms than Crellius would recommend to us; they believed the spirit which is the soul of a man was the person of the man;

and that a proselyte at his baptism received another spirit, or soul, whereby he became another man. Baptism therefore was called among them regeneration and a new birth, and the New Testament is full of allusions to these notions, which shews they were common at that time, as, being born again (John, iii. 3.), *putting off the old man* (Col. iii. 9.), *becoming new creatures* (2 Cor. v. 17.), and the like : so again power among the Jews, in theology, signified more than a quality ; it certainly meant a person ; when *angels, principalities, and powers* (Rom. viii. 38.) are ranked together, persons are meant at least, if not spirits that were persons, and Simon Magus was believed by some to be the great power of God : and among their writers the power signifies the person of God himself, agreeably to which our Saviour is described as sitting *at the right hand of power*. (Matt. xxvi. 64.) Wherefore by his own rule Cælius should have observed the propriety of idiom among those who used it, and thence inferred the personality of the Holy Ghost from his being the spirit of God, and the power of the Highest. And when to this so many personal properties are assigned to him in scripture, his old rule will never help him to guard against the Catholic conclusion. Others therefore have recourse to rhetoric, and resolve some of those expressions into a *prosopœia*, by applying to the attribute that personality which properly belongs to him whose the attribute is ; as, *the Holy Ghost said, separate me Saul and Barnabas*, means, that God by his wisdom said so. And where this figure will not serve their purpose, they suppose a metonymy, ascribing personal properties to the spirit of God, which belong to the man who is assisted by the spirit, as, *the spirit searcheth all things*, means, the true believing Christian, in whom God's spirit is, searcheth all things. But neither of these figures will interpret the personal properties ascribed to the Holy Ghost. There are no less than six ascribed to him in one single verse, *When he* (the other comforter understood) *the spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth ; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he shall shew you things to*

come. (John, xvi. 13.) No figure will enable us to interpret this text quite through, either of the person of the Father, of whom the Holy Ghost is supposed to be an attribute ; or of the persons of the Apostles, to whom it was promised to be communicated ! If of the latter, this must be the English of it ; the Apostles by the assistance of divine wisdom shall come, and guide themselves into all truth, and shew themselves things to come. Neither can we interpret it of the person of the Father, and say, that when he shall guide them into all truth, yet *he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*. From whom should he hear it ? Our Saviour proceeds, *he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you*. That is, the Father shall receive knowledge of the man Christ Jesus (as the Socinians teach) and shew to it the Apostles. But if our Saviour says, *he shall receive of mine*, because *all things which the Father hath are mine*, then to interpret it of the person of the Father makes this nonsense of it ; he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he hears or receives of himself, that shall he shew. Such artful expositors of scripture are the Socinian writers ! Their faith disdains mysteries : nothing less than absurdities will satisfy them. So that the Holy Ghost is undoubtedly a person ; for he has personal attributes or properties assigned him, which no figure can account for, in referring them either to the person of God the Father, whose the spirit is ; or to the person of the believing Christian, to whom the spirit is communicated.

Nor is he only represented in scripture as a person, but also as a person plainly distinct from the Father ; *I will send unto you from the Father the spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father*. (John, xvi. 26.) And in other places he stands personally distinguished both from the Father and the Son. As in the form of baptism ; *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) The words point to a distinction of persons, and the doctrine of baptism confirms such an interpretation. For at the first baptism, I mean that of Christ himself, they were all three present, and had distinct personal offices ; *It came to pass that Jesus being baptized,*

. . . *the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.* (Mark, i. 11. Luke, iii. 22.) And in the future baptism of Christians, the mercy of God the Father saves us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on us through Christ. So again the form of benediction, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost* (2 Cor. xiii. 14.), denotes three persons, with their oecomenical characters.

I might proceed to multiply texts, but I think these are sufficient, to prove against Socinus, that the Holy Ghost is a person, and not a mere quality or attribute only. Also, against Sabellius, that the person of the Holy Ghost is distinct from the person of the Father and the Son: as we had before proved against Arius and Macedonius, that the Holy Ghost was God.

Truths, which not only the Catholic church of Christ has always maintained, as drawn from, and proved by clear testimony of divine revelation; but which also our adversaries have divided among them, and therein approved our exposition. Does the church teach that the Holy Ghost is God? So acknowledge Sabellius and Socinus, not prejudiced in favour of the Catholic opinion, but convinced by the plainness of the scripture proofs, which they think so strong, as to infer from thence, that he is no other than God the Father. Does the church teach moreover, that the Holy Ghost is a person, and distinct from the Father? The evidence for this is so obvious through the New Testament that Arius and Macedonius, as little biased by the authority of the church as the others were, draw the same conclusions from the same scriptures; and believe him a person so distinct, as to make him a creature. Search the scriptures; their obvious meaning teaches this doctrine: if we doubt, consult their early expositors; this is their interpretation: examine what adversaries say; they are not agreed together, but the result of their evidence is a confession of these truths. Appeal to councils; this is their decreed form of faith. From all which, we believe in the

Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life; therefore a person; proceeding from the Father; and therefore distinct from him: who with the Father and the Son together be worshipped and glorified; which ought not to be, unless he be God.

As to the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, there was a dispute which long subsisted betwixt the eastern and western churches. The eastern chose to stick close to the words of scripture, which expressly mentions only his procession from the Father, and were jealous of the western church: lest they should insinuate two fountains of the Divinity, while they maintained his procession from the Son, as well as from the Father. But the western church intended no such conclusion as the Greeks were afraid of; yet held the procession from the Son, because the Father and the Son were, not two separate fountains of divinity to the Holy Ghost, but one God, one undivided source and original: and maintained their opinion by an easy deduction from scripture, which teaches us that he is *the spirit of God* (1 Cor. vi. 11.); and call him, if sometimes *the spirit of the Father*, so at other times *the spirit of the Son* (Gal. iv. 6.) and *of Christ*. (Rom. viii. ix. Phil. i. 19. 1 Pet. i. 11.) If the Father be said to send him, so also Christ promises, *I will send him to you*. (John, xv. 26.) If he be said expressly to proceed from the Father, he is no less clearly intimated to proceed from the Son, as when he says the Holy Ghost *de meo accipiat, shall receive of mine*. (John, xvi. 14.) But if jealousy of error began the dispute, a proper indignation in the Greeks widened it, because the Latins presumed to add the clause to their creed, without the sanction of a council. However, they are and were all along agreed in the truth itself, that the Holy Ghost is the spirit of both: the caution of the Greeks was not meant to deny so much, nor the forwardness of the Latins to assert more.

The Holy Ghost therefore is, "a person, proceeding from the Father and the Son, distinct from each," and "God:" to which when we have added, that "yet there is but one God," and that he is consequently "not another but the same God with the Father and the Son;" we

have then declared the whole scripture account of what the Holy Ghost is.

And here our adversaries triumph over the credulity of the Catholic Christians, whose faith can swallow such absurdities. For this, anti-scripturists reject the evidence of divine revelation, and heretical scripturists explain it away: both betraying their consent, that the plain sense of scripture is against them: both agreeing to supersede its authority, and carry their appeal from thence to the senses. But it is as absurd, as an appeal of sounds to the eye, or of colours to the ear. How can they be the sufficient judges of what never fell within their notice, of what *neither eye has seen, nor ear heard?* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) The terms in which the truths are expressed, we acknowledge are improper; and it strictly taken, and pursued through all their consequences, will certainly lead us into error, if not into absurdity. But it is not our faith in the Trinity only, but our faith in God, that is subject to the same inconveniences. We are informed, that *the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* (1 Pet. iii. 12.) Yet how is this consistent with our faith, that God has neither body, parts, or passions? Or if we believe that God is infinite, our idea is existence in every point of space, which implies multiplicity, or extension; but God is one, as well as without parts; and to make a multitude of one, is not less a mystery than the Trinity, and extension without parts is an absurdity in philosophy. Such inadequate judges are our senses of spiritual and divine truths! So unworthily do our imaginations delineate them! That we cannot form full, clear, and consistent ideas of them, is not owing to any real absurdity in the doctrines, but the disproportion of our faculties to receive them: and their being above human comprehension, is an argument that they did not spring from human invention. But of what use then is reason in religion, if it be inadequate to divine subjects? Must we not check its enquiries, and believe implicitly? By no means: religion is supreme reason; and though we are too short-sighted to discover all the agreements and harmony which con-

stitute it, yet certainly we ought not to shut our eyes on that account; we are religious creatures only because we are reasonable ones. And revelation is so far from curbing and confining the exercise of reason, that on the contrary it enlarges it, opens a wider field to expatiate in, gives new principles to build upon, a greater variety of premises to conclude from. The error of bigots and free-thinkers too, is in not giving sufficient freedom and scope to thought. The first wrap up their talent in a napkin, unreasonably dreading the austerity of their Master: the others venture but half their principle, and use but a moiety of the treasure put into their hands; their reason travels no farther than their eyes or ears, nor listens (though God himself speaks) to any thing but the report of their senses. Whereas truths revealed by God, must be as solid a foundation to conclude from, as our own experience. The senses are indeed placed as centinels to guard against error: and therefore lest we should reject God's word, or give an easy ear to human imposture, he has been pleased to give sensible evidence that it came from him, and seal his revelations with variety of miracles. But when our senses have satisfied us, that the revelation does come from God, their judgment afterwards would be very impertinent concerning the properties, affections, and relations of divine objects. But reason proceeds never the less safe, and unembarrassed, and judges from proper evidence; not measuring heavenly things by sensible, but laying the several parts of the revelation together, and *comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* (1 Cor. ii. 13.) *What sign shewest thou?* (John, ii. 18.) was a fair and just question of the Jews to our Saviour, that they might be convinced that he came from God, accordingly he appeals to his future resurrection, and when he was risen from the dead, *the word which Jesus had said was believed.* (John, ii. 22.) But when Nicodemus, who had acknowledged him to be a teacher sent from God, impertinently asked him of his doctrine, *How can these things be?* (John, iii. 9.) instead of explication, he rests himself upon the authority and sufficiency of the evidence. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak*

that we do know, and testify that we have seen. (Ver. 41.) Nor need we apprehend that at this rate the grossest contradictions may be admitted, and that transubstantiation itself will stand on as safe a footing as the doctrine of the Trinity: for this plain observation may be made; that when both the terms of a proposition are used only in an analogical, and not a proper sense, or our ideas are inadequate both to the subject and the predicate, we shall more easily fancy a contradiction than prove it: but the case is otherwise where the terms are objects of our senses, as in transubstantiation; there, though we cannot be proper judges of the divine virtue and efficacy communicated to the elements by the power of God, yet our senses are as good judges after consecration, as before, whether the elements continue in their substance bread and wine or not.

Others may say, that after the revelation is admitted for divine, it is not always easy to ascertain the sense and meaning of that revelation: how may we be satisfied about that? Here recourse must be had to the original languages in which the revelation was delivered, to grammar and criticism, history, and antiquity, to the best MSS. versions, and editions, to the quotations and interpretations of the primitive Christians, to the faith of the Catholic church, their disputes with heretics, and the decrees of general councils. All these conspire in support of the doctrine which has been now delivered.

Lastly, it may be asked, if this doctrine is of so great importance as the Catholics suppose it to be, how comes it to pass; that it was so lately discovered? That the Gentiles should be suffered to sit in such gross darkness for 4000 years; and the Jews themselves, those favourites of heaven, the nation of priests, who were entrusted with the divine oracles for the instruction of the world, should be totally ignorant of it? As the point supposed in the objection seems to receive some countenance from the text, where we find that the disciples, whether Jews or Greeks, (for both were St. Paul's auditors at Ephesus,) had yet never so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost; I

intend (God willing) in my next lecture to occur at large to this objection.

In the mean time we need not fear to conclude with the words of Dionysius of Alexandria, a celebrated Father in the third century, and whom (from his warts, and perhaps too uncircumspect opposition to Sabellianism) the Arians challenged as their own, who concludes his defence of himself with this form of doxology, derived to him from his ancestors in the faith, which shews us at once his own sense, and that of Catholic antiquity.

To God, both the Father and the Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

By GLOCESTER RIDLEY, LL. B.

Why necessary to receive the Holy Ghost.

Titus, iii. 5, 4, 5, 6, 7.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour:

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

HAVING proved the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost; and answered at large an objection urged against the novelty of this doctrine; having also explained the manner of receiving the Holy Ghost, shewing what his gifts and graces are, and how to distinguish them from counterfeits; I proceed to

The third enquiry which I proposed to make, namely, into the expediency of receiving the Holy Ghost: What is the end and benefit thereof?

Of great importance we should suspect it to be from St. Paul's making it his
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leading question to the Ephesian converts, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* (Acts, xix. 2.) How great that importance is, is very explicitly set forth in the words before us. The sum of it is salvation; according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and regeneration of or by the Holy Ghost. The parts which make up this salvation are, 1. An exemption from punishment by our acquittal in judgment, *being justified*; and, 2. A promise of great reward, *eternal life*. Both acts of mercy; for we of ourselves could not stand in that judgment, being as he describes, *foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another*; wherefore our justification is an effect of great love and kindness, it proceeds not from works of righteousness which we have done, but we are justified by grace: much less could we claim eternal life, which follows only upon such justification, and even then by promise, not of necessity; being thereby made heirs not necessarily but through hope of eternal life. The whole is ascribed to the Holy Ghost shed on us abundantly through Christ.

This representation is built upon a supposition that we are all sinners; the truth of this we must be convinced of, before we can be sensible of our want of grace, or apply ourselves in earnest to the means of receiving it.

We have seen the character St. Paul gives of the Christians in his time, that they were deep immersed in their sins when the gospel found them. And suppose ye that those Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? (Luke, xiii. 2.) or that the Greeks and Barbarians were less corrupt? The Gentiles are plainly implied in the character when he says *ἦσαν γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς*. We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, &c. even we as well as others. And in his epistle to the Romans he gives a dreadful description of the Heathen world, so bent to sin, that they were abandoned to it, given up to vile affections and a reprobate mind. (Rom. i. 26, 28.) He tell us elsewhere, that all have sinned (Rom. iii. 23.); all the world is guilty before God.

(Rom. iii. 19.) *Jew and Gentile are concluded under sin.* (Rom. iii. 9.) The writers of the Old Testament give the same account; *there is none that doeth good, no not one* (Ps. xiv. 3.); *there is not a just man that doeth good and sinneth not.* (1 Kings, viii. 46.) The Pagans give the same account; St. Paul's contemporary Seneca complains that every one has sinned more or less; that there is not a man to be found who could acquit himself; that the misfortune of human nature is such, that there is a necessity and love of sinning; and he informs us, not only what men were at that time of day, but that heretofore they had sinned, and would continue to do so as long as they lived. All history and philosophy attest this truth; all laws, precepts, and government suppose it. But the strongest unhappiest proof of all, is, that every one of us knows it by experience; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John, i. 8.) Was the case otherwise, we should have no occasion for, no interest in a Saviour; the end of his coming was to save sinners (1 Tim. i. 15.), they are the object of his mercy, and all men are the object of his mercy, for the grace of God to salvation has appeared unto all men (Tit. ii. 11.); and the gospel, the good tidings of peace and salvation, is commanded to be preached in all the world to every creature. (Mark, xvi. 15.)

The fact therefore is too notorious to be denied by any sober man; the greatest difficulty has been to account for so universal a pravity. If all men sin, under all circumstances and dispensations, there seems to be some original fault in our constitution, some unconquerable bias infused into it, which brings us under a necessity; and this removes the fault from our own wills, and transfers it to the Author of our nature. And indeed some original fault we must be obliged to acknowledge, not only from the above consideration, but also from the complaint of the Psalmist, that he was shapen, or brought forth, in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him. (Ps. li. 5.) And that of upright Job, comparatively so at least; yet even he says, that no one was

free from corruption, no though his life was but a day long: agreeable hereto we find the philosophers lamenting an inborn implanted principle of sin. Both Jews and Pagans used to offer sacrifice, and expiate the mother and the infant: and our Saviour informs us that the natural birth itself excludes us from heaven; that what is so born is flesh, which must be born again of the spirit before it enters there. (John iii. 5.) Whence it appears that we are born sinners, and infants must be accounted such, otherwise they have no claim to salvation through Christ. But will not this make God, the Author of our nature, the author also of sin? God forbid we should entertain so blasphemous a suggestion, which Christians and Heathens have jointly agreed to reject! though their accounts of it otherwise have been not a little wild and perplexed. However, as a knowledge of the disease is necessary to shew the aptness of the remedy, I shall with all humility enquire how this corruption is propagated, and how cleansed by the operations of the Holy Ghost.

In order hereto I find it will be convenient to take notice of two very remarkable and different accounts given of it in the third century of Christianity.

The one was Origen's, who supposed the present bias towards evil proceeded from ill habits contracted by the soul in a pre-existing state, where it had been created from eternity with an absolute freedom of will; but for their bad elections were encrusted with gross terrestrial bodies, and turned down into this world both for their punishment and their cure. That they undergo several changes and degrees of perfection and misery. Those who had once been angels, from an abuse of liberty were now become men, and those who now are men, by a right use of their liberty would become angels again; and that the very devils themselves should at length find a revolution in their favour. If we would know whence Origen drew his opinions, we must find out his school; his master Ammonius was a philosophical Christian; the disciple therefore derived his instructions from the scriptures and philosophy. And as we cannot find any foundation in scripture to build such tenets upon, we

must trace up to the other source, and look for them among the writings of his favourite Plato. There we read of souls attending Jupiter; some of which by the pravity of their will, which he calls their charioteer, forsake the contemplation of truth, and thereby lose their wings, or those spiritual desires which lift them up to heaven; for which they are thrust into suitable bodies of philosophers, kings, artists, mechanics, and husbandmen; in which if they behave well, they obtain a better transmigration; if ill, a worse; till purged through different states, at length their wings grow again, i. e. their spiritual desires revive, and they revert to their first condition in heaven. And this doctrine of transmigration, with many others, Plato received from Pythagoras.

The other opinion which obtained much more in the same century was propagated by that arch heretic Manes: he taught two eternal principles; one was light, the author of good, and this was God; the other was darkness, the author of evil, and that was matter; that every one of us receives a soul from each of these, the one of which is a part of God, the other a part of the evil principle, which enters into our constitution and makes a part of it; that this was an evil substance, and the cause of natural corruption. And as necessity is inseparable from matter, from this evil principle proceeded a necessity of sinning; and that all things are done by fate, according to the eternal predestination of God with respect to these two contrary principles. These, or such like opinions were indeed espoused by elder heretics in the church, such as Cerdon, Marcion, and some others; but Manes seems rather to have succeeded to them as a Persian, and heir to the doctrines and books of his master, Terebinthus, deriving them from Zoroaster the contemporary and probably the acquaintance of Pythagoras. Contrary as these opinions look, it would be no great difficulty so far to reconcile them as to shew, with no little probability, that they both derived from the same tradition, which was divided amongst them, and corrupted. Notions of this evil principle we meet with among all nations, so widely scattered from one another, that they must have received it from some very

ancient doctrine; the Jews, the Egyptians, the Brahmins, the Chinese, the Peruvians discover it; but these all suppose him to have been created, and the Persians in particular shew how they came by this opinion, calling him expressly by the name of Satan. These considering that angels only after his fall, and from a tradition of the temptation in paradise, fancied sin proceeded from the overpowerful influences of an evil principle; but the Grecian philosophers caught the other part of that angel's history, who fell from heaven by an abuse of his free-will, whence they taught that the will was free to good or evil, though both acknowledged that our immersion in matter lays a bias upon it to the last.

The unhappy encrease and consequence of the Manichæan doctrines in the end of the third century, indulging men in their vices by throwing the blame on an evil nature and necessity of sinning, made Pelagius in the beginning of the 4th, a man eminent for his piety in the Christian church, endeavour to awaken men from this indolent giving way to vice, by magnifying the powers of nature and free-will, of which the Manichees had spoken too unworthily; and taught a freedom of will in all men to good or ill, without the assistance of grace; though he acknowledged that the flesh gives a propensity to ill, and that therefore the divine assistance was desirable to facilitate our choice of virtue. This was agreeable to the Platonic opinion before mentioned, a little new dressed and altered by Origen and his disciples. But it was contrary to scripture, which teaches us, that it is God, and not nature, that worketh in us both to *will* and to *do* (Phil. ii. 13.); that without Christ we can do nothing (1 John, xv. 5.) and therefore exhorts us, not only to *watch* according to our own powers, but also to *pray* (Matth. xxvi. 41.) for farther help, that we *enter not into temptation*: and as it is quite subversive of the doctrine of grace, was warmly opposed by St. Augustin before the middle of that century. His abhorrence of Pelagianism might perhaps make him fly too far towards the other extreme, to which when young he had been addicted; however some of his incautious followers have certainly too much inclined

to Manichæism. Some dregs of which appear, not only in the Fomes Peccati of the Mahometans, which locally descended to them from the instructors of Manes who were Saracens; but also in the corrupted substance which the Zuinglians made original sin to be, and in the transformation of our natures into devils; being half devils and half beasts, as if our souls were emanations of the bad principle, imprisoned in bodies which we have in common with the brutes; in the doctrine of a necessity of sinning in consequence of God's predestination; and some others, which are originally Manichæism strained through the less guarded passages of St. Augustin.

I thought it convenient to take notice of these two very different accounts, and trace them up to their originals, 1. That I might remove out of the Christian church some strange doctrines which we find taught in it, and restore them to their true owners. 2. To observe that this universal corruption is assented to by men of all complexions, remote from one another both in sentiment and situation as east is from the west; the darkness of Paganism would not cover this truth, and heresy felt it in its own perverseness; no air or clime could heal the disease; fled men to China or Peru, the wound went with them. So that we must deduce it from the same common source that we derive our natures from, which is, the first parents of human kind. A third use which I would make of this view is, to be a check upon our judgments, that, since the extremes of free-will and necessary evil have introduced many errors into the Christian church, we be upon our guard, lest the authority of names, and veneration of persons, mislead us contrary to the scriptures. Let not the unblameable beginning of Pelagius's life seduce us into a vain confidence of our own strength, that we can do without Christ, to the overthrow of grace; nor the sanctity of that great light and champion of Christianity St. Augustin, who found cause to retract many things which his zeal had dropped, persuade us to leave off *working out our own salvation* (Phil. ii. 12.), from misinterpreted notions of God's decrees, and irresistible grace. I know no better guide to conduct us through

this intricate question than that father himself is : he tell us, the true Christian "so asserts free-will as to impute the origin of sin, both in angels and men, to an abuse of that, and not to a nature essentially evil of which we have no account ; this utterly destroys Manichæism : at the same time, that the will, since captivated, cannot recover its liberty again but by the grace of God ; which destroys the heresy of Pelagius."

This is the true state of the case according to the scriptures : they will guard us against the two dangerous extremes of an arrogant merit to which we have no claim ; and the indolent excuse of fate and necessity, for which we have no grounds. If we examine those sacred records, they will inform us, that *God created man in his own image* (Gen. i. 27.) ; which Solomon explains, when he says, that *God hath made man upright* (Eccles. vii. 31.) ; able to weigh things with an equal balance, which had no light end to kick at spiritual good for want of knowledge, nor necessarily weighed down to earthly things from the overpoise of affections. An attribute ascribed to God by the prophet, *thou upright, doest weigh the path of the just.* (Isaiah, xxvi. 7.) Whence the book of Wisdom observes, that *God, made man the image of his own propriety* ; and so long as no perverse choice made him decline from this original uprightness, he had great variety of enjoyments prepared for him in Paradise, with privilege to eat of the tree of life, by which means he might live for ever. Thus man was created in incorruption, and his righteousness, had he continued in it, would have made him immortal. The knowledge of spiritual good, without which the will could not have been free, or have power to choose it, was not essential, but supernaturally vouchsafed by immediate revelations from God, and communications with him : immortality was not necessary to his nature, but the additional gift and reward of his Creator, to be-acquired by the use of means.

We are afterwards informed, that by the suggestions of the serpent, which the envy of the devil employed, (one of those *angels who sinned and kept not their first estate* (2 Pet. ii. 4. Jud. 6.) or dignity,

but deserted their own habitations, fragments of which tradition we before observed among the philosophers ; through his suggestions, I say, we are informed that) our first parents were prevailed upon to make a wrong election, choosing to indulge appetite, and the senses, rather than believe or regard the commands of information of heaven, by one obstinate act renouncing the divine assistance, and defying the mortality which God had threatened. The soul, which before was enlightened by the perpetual presence of God in it, after this voluntary departing from it was confounded in the darkness of its own natural faculties : all the knowledge he attained, was the comfortless experience of a benighted traveller ; he knew his sun was set, and that his own eyes would no longer serve him to escape precipices : they were indeed open, but discerned only the want of the divine light and protection : they could discover no traces to lead him *where the light dwelleth* (Job, xxxviii. 12. 19.), nor was it in his power to *command the morning*, and call forth the day-star to rise in his heart again. Nor was this all his misery ; for the consciousness of his guilt introduced disordered passions into his soul, such as shame, fear, remorse, irregular appetites, and aversion from God. *They made themselves aprons ; they were afraid ; and hid themselves* (Gen. iii. 7, 8, 10.) from the presence of God. Thus his freedom of will was weakened towards spiritual good, by the want of that supernatural knowledge which made it a poise against carnal things ; and at the same time inclined to evil by the inlet and torrent of irregular passions. The consequence of this loss of righteousness, was loss of happiness : man thus disordered, and averse from God, could not but be miserable. His Maker therefore in justice deprived him of those blessings in paradise which were the entertainment of his innocence, and not without a mixture of pity too, excluded him from the opportunity of reaching to the tree of life, lest he should *eat and live for ever* (Gen. iii. 22.) ; and so immortalize a sinful and miserable being. Thus was he left to his own blind conduct and the sweat of his brow for a subsistence, subject to the calamities of his own diseased affections, and the tu-

behaviour of his posterity born in the same condition, till the decays of age or wore or broke the springs of life, crumbling his body into original earth, and dismissing the soul, polluted with many habits of sin, and for ever deprived of its body, which was once designed its comfort and instrument of happiness, to spend its future existence in the remorse of past guilt, and a view of the ruin wilfully brought upon itself and human nature. The departure of the spirit of God from the soul, was the death of it. So Adam died in the day that he eat of the forbidden tree. The troubles and afflictions, which necessarily attended his deserted state, were the first scenes that opened upon him in this new region of death, the beginnings of his punishment:

—Primis in faucibus Orci
Lus et nitricus posuere cubilia curæ. *Verg.*

The dissolution of the body was but a single arrow from the loaded quiver of this king of terrors, and the natural consequence of being driven from the tree of life. The sorrowful widowhood of the soul, afterwards through ages of hopeless end, altogether make that eternal death which *dying* he was to *die*. (Gen. ii. 17.)

Such was Adam's sin, and such his punishment; the important question follows; How far are we concerned in either?

Adam for his sin was driven out of Paradise; and it is certain that his posterity were driven out with him. labour and weariness were appointed to him; and we feel that the curse descends to those sprung from him; he became subject to diseases and death. I mean that which respects the dissolution of soul and body; and experience convinces us that he has left this unhappy inheritance to his children. And as all these were but the consequential punishment of that spiritual death which Adam died, in losing the divine assistance and support of God's holy spirit which he voluntarily renounced and forfeited; so the like appearances of sickness and decay in us, are a manifest proof, that where the root is cut off from the waters and receives no nourishment, the *dew* (Job, xxix. 10.) of heaven will not rest upon the branches to

give them life and verdure. These were inflicted upon him as a punishment of his disobedience; in which punishment we are involved, without any personal guilt of our own; we therefore are sufferers on the account of Adam's sin, and are treated in the same manner that he was, whose actual guilt alone it was: forsaken of God; void of supernatural knowledge; strangers to, and averse from spiritual good; and immersed in the affections of a sensual life.

But there is a passage in the third of Genesis which seems to represent the consequences of eating of the forbidden fruit more like the glorious effects which the serpent promised: *And the Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.* (Gen. iii. 22.)

Then was the devil no liar, and the throwing Adam, because thus improved, out of Paradise (as the following words sound) casts a reflection on the divine philanthropy. To avoid this sense of the words, many of the fathers, and I think the general stream of interpreters, suppose them a sarcasm used by God, as a kind of triumph over man's mistake and misery. But a still less harsh explication may be given, quite consistent with the words, and more agreeable to the tenor of scripture.

Maimonid observes that the tree is not said to be of the knowledge of true and false, which are the objects of the understanding; but of good and evil, not moral but natural, things pleasant and disagreeable to the sensual appetites. While Adam continued innocent, and followed the dictates of the divine reason, such objects made but transient and secondary impressions upon him; but when he renounced that guidance, and preferred sensual delights and entertainments, instead of spiritual truths, the mind was taken up with the apprehension of sensible objects, and given up to earthly and vile affections. This, according to that learned Jew, was the knowledge of good and evil. But if so, how could God say, *Behold the man is become like one of us*? What we translate *of us*, may be singular in the original, and is so rendered by Onkelos, *ex eo*. If therefore Adam *נדר* be taken col-

lectively for human kind, as it frequently is, when π is prefixed, as it is here, the sense of the passage will be this; Behold, all mankind issuing from this stock is as one, left to the guidance of sensual appetites; and therefore that they might not immortalize a miserable being, God excluded him, and them in him, from the privilege of eating of the tree of life. This represents God more like himself, mixing mercy with justice, and not triumphing over fallen man: this represents us, as we find ourselves, carnal, earthly, animal, a kind of reasoning brutes, entangled and entertained with sensible objects, and subject to the infirmities, wants, decays, and miseries which our own blindness and perverseness, and that of others like ourselves, expose us to. This leaves room (what many moderns are so solicitous about) for a Tully to shine in the knowledge of social duties resulting from natural and civil relations; and for a Newton's genius to exercise itself in observations upon nature as high as telescopes can reach, or low as microscopes descend. They may excel in degrees of the knowledge of such good and evil; but if they have no principles of farther knowledge, what furniture or felicity will this be to them, when *all these things shall be dissolved* (2 Pet. iii. 11.), when relations cease, and nature fails?

This interpretation harmonizes with the sacred writings in other places. St. Paul tells us, that *through the offence of one, judgment passed upon all men to condemnation* (Rom. v. 18.); that *by one man's disobedience many were made sinners* (Rom. v. 19.); *through the offence of one, many be dead* (Rom. v. 15.), or *that in Adam all die*. (1 Cor. 15, 22.) Wherefore we, (who are but the unfoldings and continuation of Adam) are counted or dealt with as sinners on the score of his actual guilt, and evidently share in the punishment which was inflicted on it. Thus Adam's sin is imputed to us, or reckoned and placed to our account, so far as to involve us in the sentence passed upon him. Thus *infirmity was made permanent with the malignity of the root*. (Esd. iv. 22.) And because Adam transgressed, *death was appointed in him, and in his generations, of whom came nations, tribes, peo-*

ple and kindreds out of number. (iv. 7.)

But a late celebrated writer informs that "to affirm that the first actual sin of Adam was imputed to all mankind as well as to him, is to affirm what the scripture does not teach. And if to impute to other persons the actual sin of one, to account it theirs as well as his, it is evident this is impossible with God, who cannot account sin or any thing else to be what it is not." (Clark's xviith Ser. p. 303, 304.) An appetite to the tree of knowledge, and a degree to be wise in contempt of God's word, is the actual guilt of many of Adam's sons as well as of Adam. If God cannot account to some persons the actual sin of another, then can he not do what he has threatened, *visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children* (Exod. xx. 5.); then could he not command, what we find recorded as his command. (Deut. xiii. 14, 15.) That if any city prove idolaters the inhabitants should be destroyed utterly, and all that was therein. Fathers, children, grand-children, great grand-children, and the new-born children, (as Maimonides expounds it) were all killed for the sin of their parents. Then again on Christ was not *laid the iniquity of us all* (Is. liii. 6.), we therefore must for ever bear our own actual sins. And if it be impossible for God to account sin to be what it is not, it is equally impossible for him to account it not to be what it is; wherefore the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 19.) must seem an idle tale, since God cannot but impute our trespasses unto us. But if to account as ours, the actual sin of another, be so to place it to our account, as to involve us in the punishment inflicted upon, or due to that other; then, as *Christ bore our sins upon the tree* (1 Pet. ii. 24.); so to us may be imputed the transgression of Adam. And this the scripture does teach, when it informs us, that we are *made sinners by his disobedience*; and that *all die in him*. Truths which this writer could not but acknowledge, which he does in the next paragraph, where he tells us, that "the consequences of this introducing sin into the world (by Adam) common with him and his posterity are, mortality, exclusion out of paradise, the miseries of the

present life, and a greater lability and stronger temptation to sin in their corrupt affections." These he says are the natural and necessary consequences of "his losing those free gifts and favours of God, which neither we nor he ever had any claim of right to enjoy." Yet as it is a loss to us of free gifts and favours which we are deprived of only for Adam's guilt, it is plain that his guilt is so far placed to our account, and imputed to us in punishment.

But we are not only made sinners by imputation, but become such, secondly, in consequence of the spirit of God receding from the soul, whereby we lose that divine image in which we were created, and are sunk in the darkness and ignorance of our own unassisted natural faculties. Adam was absolutely free to good as well as evil, but lost the principle of free-will by his distorted and perverse application of it: for the heavenly light withdrawn, left him and his posterity incapable of loving spiritual good, of which they were ignorant, by their estrangement from God, and the want of his gracious communications. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.* (Eph. iv. 18.) Nor were they only thus negatively bad; but thirdly, positively so, by having their affections determined to carnal things from the perpetual presence of those things, and the appearance of good which they exhibited to the senses, which work in them a disinclination and aversion to any attempt that is made to draw them off from their beloved engagements and deceptions. This is the old man, our original human nature, which the Apostle tells us is corrupt, *through the deceitful lusts* (Eph. iv. 22.) *κατὰ τὰς ἐκτετακτὰς ἀνάγκας*, appetites the consequence of error. This is the *φύσις σαρκὸς*, the disposition, wisdom or affection of the flesh, which hangs a bias on the will, and is the distortion and depravation of it. This concupiscence is the principle of actual sin in us, and as it would (if we are not assisted by the grace of God) be infallibly the parent of it, it has in itself the nature of sin, and casts us out of the favour of God. *They that are in the flesh cannot please God*

(Rom. viii. 8.) for its affection is *enmity against him; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, (Rom. viii. 7.) And as thus by one man sin entered into the world, so

II. Also death by sin; as an alienation from God is a state of sin, so a state of sin is a state of death; wherefore the Gentiles are described as *dead in trespasses and sins*. (Eph. ii. 1.) The dissolution of soul and body follows as *the wages of sin* (Rom. vi. 23.), through which the body dies, which is the first death, while the soul in its perpetual exile shall suffer a *second death* (Rev. xx. 6.), burning in the flames of unsatisfied appetites which shall not be quenched, and suffering from the consciousness and remorse of past guilt, which shall never die.

Such is our fatal inheritance from Adam, affording abundant occasion for the divine philanthropy, to which not our merit, but our misery recommends us; and the salvation effected for us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is represented in the scriptures as corresponding to every part of our ruin, as an instance of grace, and to which we had no claim by nature.

If our old man be corrupt, through the loss of the divine image and similitude, by which our understandings are darkened, and our wills perverted, by this we are *renewed again in knowledge after the image of him who created us* (Col. iii. 10.), which is called our *new man, created after God, in righteousness and true holiness*. (Eph. iv. 24.)

If the *φύσις σαρκὸς* or natural concupiscence hangs a weight on our affections, and inclines them to earth, the *φύσις πνεύματος* or spiritual desires, is a balance against the carnal mind, and restores the will to its freedom, which is the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*. (Rom. viii. 5. 21.)

If the same natural concupiscence leads us to the commission of actual sins, and creates an enmity betwixt God and us (Rom. viii. 7.); our Saviour takes upon himself the sins of those to whom he sends the spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 15. 32. 34.), to assure them of the love (Joh. iii. 16.), and engraft them into the family of God (Joh. i. 12.) and to seal

them to the day of redemption. (Eph. iv. 20.)

Lastly, if this carnal mind be a principle of death in us, of a spiritual, a temporal, and an eternal death, the spirit is in us a principle of life and peace, (Rom. viii. 6.) quickening those who were *dead in their sins by having forgiven them all trespasses*. (Col. ii. 13.) The dissolution of soul and body is no more a death but sleep (1 Cor. xv. 20. 2 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15.), a rest from labour (Rev. xiv. 13.), a returning home from exile (2 Cor. v. 8.), a passage to a blessed immortality. (Joh. v. 24.) *The spirit which raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies* (Rom. viii. 11.), and raise our corruptible in incorruption (1 Cor. xv. 42.), where *our mortality shall be swallowed up of life*. (2 Cor. v. 4.) A life more lasting and more glorious than this which is measured and influenced by suns and moons, *for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof* (Rev. xxi. 23.); where we shall reign for ever and ever, and receive from the Spirit the consummation of that bliss of which he is here the earnest.

As this account of the need and necessity of receiving the Holy Ghost in his enlightening, sanctifying, and quickening graces, is drawn from the sacred scriptures; so is it the genuine doctrine of the church of England, as may be seen not only in her articles of original sin, free-will, and justification; but also in her first rudiments laid down by Archbishop Cranmer and the rest of the committee of divines, in their treatise called a "Necessary Erudition for a Christian Man." Where we are thus instructed: "The state and condition of free-will was otherwise in our first parents before they had sinned, than it was either in them or their posterity after they had sinned; for our first parents, Adam and Eve, until they wounded and overthrew themselves by sin, had so in possession the power of free-will by the most liberal gift and grace of God their Maker, that not only they might eschew all manner of sin, but also know God, and love him, and fulfil all things appertaining to their supreme felicity. For they were created in a state

of righteousness, and after the image and similitude of God, having power of free-will to obey or disobey. So that by obedience they might live, and by disobedience they should worthily deserve to die. From this most happy state, our first parents falling by disobedience, most grievously hurt themselves and their posterity: for besides many other evils that came by that transgression, the high power of man's reason and freedom of will were wounded and corrupted; and all men thereby brought into such blindness and infirmity, that they cannot eschew sin, except they be illuminated, and are free, by an especial grace, that is to say, by a supernatural help, and working of the Holy Ghost. Although there remains a certain freedom of will in those things which do pertain to the desires and works of this present life, yet to perform spiritual and heavenly things, free-will of itself is insufficient. And therefore the power of man's free-will being thus wounded and decayed, hath need of a physician to heal it, and an help to repair it, that it may receive light and strength, whereby it may see, and have power to do those godly and spiritual things, which before the fall of Adam, it was able and might have done."

I shall now proceed to consider the means of receiving these graces; but before I do so, it will be necessary to examine some doctrines, which, if true, will make those means so arbitrary, as to take away all encouragement and invitation to seek after them. This I propose to do (God willing) the next opportunity.

SERMON XXV.

The Means of Grace.

Titus, iii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour:
That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

HAVING shewn that the occasion or want of grace is as universal as human nature;

and that God's will and desire to save is represented as reaching to all men, I endeavoured to answer some objections drawn from the doctrine of election and reprobation, with regard to particular persons to whom the gospel is preached; and then with regard to whole nations from whom that light is at present withheld: I afterwards entered upon the consideration of the strongest argument against universal grace, I mean the supposed want of it for 4000 years, from the fall of Adam to the Ascension of Christ; where having shewn, that there was grace in various measures dispensed under the several dispensations before the law, under the law, and without the law, I proposed to remark more distinctly to what purposes the grace then dispensed was effectual, and what the disadvantages of those dispensations were, compared with that of the gospel; previous to my fourth and last enquiry, viz. into the means of that grace shed abundantly on us through Jesus Christ

Under each of those states there was, by means of divine communications either immediate or remote, grace dispensed sufficient for the attaining a love of God; a knowledge of religious and social duties; a withdrawing the affections from the world; and a faith in the promises of good things beyond this life.

1. A love of God: Thus Enoch had a testimony that *he pleased God* (Heb. xi. 5.); and Noah *was found perfect and righteous* (Eccle. xlv. 17.); Job *was upright and feared God* (Job. i. 1.); and David's soul panted after him, *loving nothing in comparison of him*. (Psal. lxxiii. 24.) The gentile philosophy would supply us with many specimens of their exalted notions on this head, though the true object of worship was mistaken or unknown. The prayers, alms, and fasts of Cornelius (Acts, x. 4.): and the many devout worshippers among the Greeks (Acts, xvii. 4.), recorded in the New Testament, are more perfect instances of this love, even to the true God, the God of Israel.

2. The knowledge of religious and social duties was revealed to the antediluvian world, by which they were *convinced of their ungodly deeds, which they ungodly committed*. (Jude, 15.) These

were handed down to the postdiluvians by Noah, and were called his precepts by his sons, who carried with them into all the regions of the new world the great lines of religion and morality. This was the law of the Most High which Abraham kept; which restrained Abimelech; which made Joseph dread to sin against God; and taught upright Job to eschew evil. But as this law was corrupted or obliterated, and in danger of being totally lost, God was pleased to republish it by Moses; while the broken fragments of it only were left to the rest of the world, which the legislators and philosophers have industriously sought after, and wove among their own systems of law and ethics. Their own reasonings and observations upon the fitness and beauty of those rules, which made them approve them, and give a sanction to them, where their divine authority was unknown, and their proper application and unfolding them in particular cases, was what St. Paul calls *the work of the law written in their hearts*. (Rom. ii. 15.) A third operation of the Holy Ghost in those days was a power in men to withdraw their affection from the world. Thus Moses *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*. (Heb. xi. 25, 26.) Nay, the time would fail says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *to tell of those before the coming of Christ who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*. (Ibid. 32, 35, 36, 37.) The Pagan moralists are full of these sentiments in their writings, and not entirely destitute of examples in their practice.

The fourth effect and sign of the Spirit of God in those early times, was a faith in the promises of good things beyond this life. By this, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; and Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith: by this Abraham was justified, and thousands of his descendants died in full expectation of future good

things. Among the Gentiles, besides those whose actions were in some degree influenced by the hopes of rewards and happiness hereafter, many we read of who renounced the world, gave in their names as worshippers of the God of Israel, in confidence of his favour in another world, becoming therefore his servants and soldiers, enlisted as St. Luke expresses it *παραλαβόντες*, or as we render it, *ordained to eternal life*. (Acts, xiii. 48.)

The principal disadvantages of their state in comparison of those under the gospel, were, that when they knew and felt their corruption they were strangers to the cure of it; St. Paul breathes out the melancholy sigh of men in that state when he cries, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of death!* But the Christian gives thanks to God for his redemption *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. (Rom. vii. 24, 25.) It is true the others were acquainted with rules to direct them, and believed that a behaviour conformable thereto would make them like God and happy; but the more light they had given them to discern their duty, the more heinous and dangerous their offences appeared, so that *the commandment which was ordained to life they found to be unto death*. (Rom. vii. 10.) But we know that *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us* (Gal. iii. 13.) *blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*. (Colos. ii. 14.) They had indeed an indistinct faith that God would be favourable to them in another world, but whether he would entirely pardon their sins for which their consciences reproached them, or in what manner or measure he would punish them, they knew nothing of. But now not only a total remission of sins is preached by the word of reconciliation, but *life and immortality is also brought to light through the gospel* (2 Tim. i. 10.)

With regard to their final condition, it may be farther asked, whether the grace vouchsafed before the incarnation was sufficient to save those to whom it was given? If it was, what more can be obtained by Christians? If not, how does

that deserve the name of grace, which served not to benefit, but perplex and disturb mankind? And here not charity only will lead us to hope, but truth oblige us to believe, that the ages before Christ came in the flesh had grace sufficient vouchsafed them, by which they might be saved. For Christ who was sacrificed for us was *the lamb slain before the salvation of the world* (Rev. xiii. 8.), *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*. (Heb. ix. 15.) If no grace or favour was dispensed to them, but they all stand condemned in Adam's sentence, there seems no room left for another tribunal, to judge those whose consciences accuse or excuse them both in the law, and without the law, which yet, according to St. Paul's gospel, will be done *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*. (Rom. ii. 12, 16.) In which judgment the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah, *i. e.* under fewer means of grace, shall condemn the obstinacy of such as would not repent under greater, after the coming of Christ. Nay, we have our Saviour's word for it, that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shall sit down in the kingdom of God*. (Matt. viii. 11.) Nor is this salvation confined to Jews only, as an exclusive privilege because God loved Jacob; for Esau whom he hated, as has been before observed, is not supposed to be finally lost or reprobated. Among his posterity, and out of the Jewish church, was holy Job, of whose salvation I think neither Jew or Christian ever doubted, who allowed him any existence. The Jewish doctors granted a place in the life to come to their proselytes of the gate, the devout Gentiles, who observed the moral law, not from a philosophical opinion of its beauty and fitness, but from a religious sense of its divine obligation, and from a love and dread of the Sacred Imposer. Of this number, among others, was Candace's eunuch (Acts, viii. 27.), and Cornelius the centurion (Acts, x. 1.), and other *devout Greeks a great multitude*. (Acts, xvii. 4.) A due use of their few talents recommended them to the trust of more from the preaching of the gospel; but such as behaved like

them before Christ's ministry, cannot be supposed totally out of the reach of God's merciful acceptance. Not but that there will doubtless be a great difference betwixt them in their degrees of happiness; else there had been but little use in the ministry of Philip to the eunuch, or of St. Peter to Cornelius, or of Christ and his Apostles to the true Israelites and devout Greeks. And if the fewer allotments of grace will abate the number of stripes (Luk. xii. 48.) to those who transgress, we must with great justice suppose, that they will also make an abatement in glory to those who have used them worthily. The five talents of the Christians, well managed, procure for them the precedency over five cities; the two talents of the Jews will enable them to obtain two cities, though no more; and even the one talent of the Gentiles, if it had not been buried in the earth, but had been properly improved, would have recommended them to still farther means of grace through an acquaintance with the living oracles deposited in the keeping of the Jews, which was vouchsafed to some, by which means they would also have received, though not an equal reward with those who were more favoured, yet a proportionable one. (Matt. xxv. 14, &c.) The earthly Jerusalem is represented as a type of *that which is above*; and *the tabernacle as the pattern of heavenly things*. (Heb. viii. 5.) In which view the author of Ep. Hebr. observes many particulars, which seem to cast light upon this point. There was the court of the Gentiles, and others still nearer and nearer to the Divine Majesty for the Israelites and priests; but neither of these had permission to enter into the Sanctum sanctorum; *the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing, which was a figure for the time then present*. (Heb. ix. 8, 9.) *But God has prepared some better things for us: wherefore we, brethren, have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*. (Heb. x. 19.)

Nor was this all; for as the happiness was less, so the number of those who attained to it before the gospel dispensation, was probably much less than of those

since the incarnation. But this, not because sufficient grace was denied, but because they resisted it, the generality of the old world brought the deluge upon it: however: this is no proof that the Spirit was not yet; for the Spirit strove to correct the imaginations of their hearts. (Gen. vi. 3. 5.)

If a very inconsiderable number of the Jews are sealed (Rev. vii. 4.), St. Stephen gives us the reason, not because there was no grace under that œconomy, but because they were uncomplying with it, *stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, they and their fathers always resisting the Holy Ghost*. (Acts, vii. 51.) And with regard to the Gentiles, St. Paul tells us, that *when they knew God, they worshipped him not as God, neither were thankful*; wherefore *even as they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind*. (Rom. i. 28.)

But though all these had light sufficient to have led them to some degrees of happiness in another life, and their voluntary departure from it will justly subject them to punishment; yet their want of that abundance which God undeservedly has afforded us, shall make it *more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for us, if we neglect such great salvation*. (Heb. ii. 3.) The fear of greater punishment to those who reject greater grace, and the sure confidence of more abundant glory to those who have more abundant grace vouchsafed them here, should make us earnest to obtain the largest measures of it that we can, and diligent to improve what we do obtain. Which brings me to the last general head,

To enquire into the means by which the Holy Ghost is dispensed and shed abundantly upon us.

It is from the Giver only that we can know by what means he will please to dispense his gifts; and where he has appointed any, we may safely rely upon them, so as to expect grace by the due use of them, but can have no sure grounds to expect it from any other. For though God be not so tied to his own appointed means, as to restrain himself from bestowing grace by any other method if he pleases, yet his appoint-

ment lays a necessary obligation upon us to apply to it for such spiritual aids as he has promised to give thereby. Yet, though we are to apply ourselves to such means, and from them only can expect grace, we must not look upon them otherwise than as means, nor believe them to be, or themselves to give that grace of which they are no more than the channels. So that to neglect the means appointed by God, is either infidelity, in not believing them to be available for the end for which God has appointed them; or else, a great impiety, in contemning the grace thereby to be vouchsafed. To apply ourselves to other means than those appointed, is enthusiasm, as it dreams of divine communications from the impulse of our own imaginations, without sufficient warrant from the ordinary revelation of scripture, or an extraordinary one duly attested. Or to reverence even the appointed means in such a manner as to look upon them as if they were what they convey, or that by their natural efficacy they produced those effects, of which by God's will only they are the moral instruments, is a superstitious opinion, and idolatrous veneration.

The great instituted mean is the gospel in general, as comprehending the divine truths inspired by the Holy Ghost, and written by the sacred penman, together with those heavenly lessons written in the sacred character, God's own hieroglyphics, those *verba visibilia*, as St. Austin calls them, the sacraments, speaking to every man in his own tongue the wonderful dispensations of God. Of this gospel, comprehending as well the sacraments as the written word, are those characters to be understood, that *it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth* (Rom. i. 16.); *that it is an incorruptible seed by which we are born again.* (1 Pet. i. 23.)

But the spiritual man, like the natural, is to be considered in three states; 1. His conception, to which the written word does peculiarly conduce. 2. His new birth or regeneration, which is effected by baptism. And, 3. His growth and nourishment, which owes itself chiefly to the divine sustenance of the Lord's supper. Of which I shall treat in their order.

1. The written word: the great end of which is, to procure us the gift of faith, for *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Rom. x. 17.) When men had a full, though sorrowful knowledge of sin, and were sensible of the infirmity and misery of their condition, that they had greatly offended, and had just reason to dread punishment; (which were lessons which God taught them in the schools of the law and of philosophy, and lessons which had been so fully learned by the disciples under each, as was seen before, that both were convinced of their need of farther light and assistance :) when this fulness of time was come, when the Jews longed for a Redeemer, the Prophet that should tell them all things, and fled to Amon confessing their sins, that they might escape the wrath to come (John, iii. 23. Matt. iii. 5, 6, 7.), which they deserved and feared; when philosophy had experienced its inability to reform mankind, and gave up the cause of virtue as hopeless and unattainable by their systems, and despaired of atonement from their custom of sacrifices, wishing for farther information from heaven; then Christ the blessing (Gen. xii. 3.), and the desire (Hag. ii. 7.) of all nations came, to make manifest the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations, the hope of glory, (Coloss. i. 26, 27.) When they found themselves stripped of their innocence, and half dead, and that the priest and the Levite would afford them no assistance, our Saviour came, like his own good Samaritan, to bind up their wounds, and pour in oil and wine.

But as the gospel succeeds into, so also it supplies the place of the law, whether as re-delivered to Moses, or gathered up by the philosophers, and supersedes not their use by making it unlawful to seek for any light there, it comes not to destroy (Matth. v. 17.), but to fulfil, or complete what was defective in them: it restores the spiritual meaning of the Mosaic statutes, which the Jewish interpreters had buried under their glosses; and gives a sanction and divine authority to the moral precepts, of which philosophy had lost the knowledge. So that the lowest of its praise is to surpass the

highest excellences of any preceding economy, to be a finer system of morality than any of the Gentiles could furnish out, and a clearer exposition and reading on the Jewish law than any of their Rabbis have been able to make. To those who hear it, it better answers the very end at which they aimed, and for which they were designed, doctrine, conviction, correction, and instruction in righteousness. It therefore more effectually conveys the grace, in some measure, attainable under former dispensations, a conviction of our sins, and compunction for them. It is *sharper than the two-edged* (Heb. iv. 12.) instrument of the priest with which he dissected the sin-offering, piercing to the very inmost recesses, and lays open our most hidden blemishes and defects; till *pricked to the heart* from a sense of guilt, and of the Majesty offended by it, we cry out for help, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* (Acts, ii. 37.) But though the word be the same seed, and so equally good, yet cast into different soils, it has very different effects. Some, though their vices flash in their faces at hearing the word, and conscious guilt *cuts them to the heart*, yet instead of humbling, they harden themselves and *gnash* (Acts, vii. 54.) upon the preacher *with their teeth*: instead of bewailing, defend or excuse their crimes: instead of fearing the punishment, make light of the threatening; and instead of reforming, add sin unto sin. Who, *when they hear the words of the curse, yet bless themselves in their heart, and say, I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of mine heart to add drunkenness to thirst.* (Deut. xxi. 19.) Others again though brought to tremble when *reasoned with of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*; yet, with Felix, divert the thoughts for the present, under pretence of waiting for a more convenient season. (Acts, xxiv. 25.) If such are deprived of farther grace, they cannot charge God with unkindness: his Holy Spirit has stood at their doors, and knocked, and they refused to open unto him. But to those who have complied with this grace, by acknowledging and grieving for their offences, and flying to God for help, the word is an instrument of conveying more, by opening to them a clear and distinct hope of salvation.

And here begins the peculiar use and efficacy of the gospel: the thunders, and lightnings, and smoke of the mountain (Exod. xix. 16. 18.), which accompanied the law, vanish away and are heard no more; the terrors of the Divine Majesty *written* into the affections of *our Father* who is in heaven. (Matt. vi. 9. See 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9. 14. 18.) He is represented to us as *love* (1 John, iv. 8.) itself, as willing to be reconciled (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.), and not impute our trespasses unto us. That the guilty mind may bear up against the uneasy apprehensions of an angry God, from the repeated declarations of his kindness and philanthropy. (John, iii. 16. Tit. iii. 4.) The sufferings of the Son of God for our sins (1 Pet. i. 21. 24.), the ransom of his blood (Acts, xx. 28. Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.), and the satisfaction thereby made for us (Rom. v. 9. Col. i. 20.), are perpetually inculcated, and in various methods, to discharge the conscious soul of its fears from the divine justice, that *all that labour and are heavy laden may have rest.* (Matt. xi. 28.) The fellowship and abiding of the Holy Spirit with us (2 Cor. xiii. 14. Phil. i. 2. John, xiv. 16.), to adopt us into the family of God (Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6.), and unite us unto him (John, xvii. 21. 23. 1 John, iii. 24.), who enables us to combat against nature (Rom. vii. 7. 9. Eph. ii. 2. 8.), and the prince of this world: to sow the seed and principle of eternal life in our hearts (Rom. viii. 10.); to triumph over death (Rom. viii. 11.), and seal us to the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30.), are so frequently and affectionately promised, that the sense of our own weakness and mortality need no longer discourage us from entertaining *the hope of glory laid up in heaven for us, whereof we have heard in the word of the truth of the gospel.* (Col. i. 5.) This love of God, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through his salvation applied to us, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, are not the objects of our senses, and are proposed in the written word only as in our power to obtain; the natural man therefore who will believe nothing but his outward senses,* can have no evidence of their truth, nor consequently entertain any hope of the promise; we may so engage

and embarrass ourselves with things present, as to neglect or reject the revelation; or our prejudices and ignorance may so interpret it, as either to disbelieve the mercy offered, or despair of it; offending against stumbling-blocks of our own laying, or treating as foolishness whatever conclusions are drawn from premises of which our senses have no certain testimony. But through the prolific influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying the written word, by which it becomes the good seed sown, and without which it is but scattered chaff, it may take root in our hearts, producing that faith which gives substance to the things hoped for, and evidence to the things not seen. (Heb. xi. 1.) This gift is conveyed to us by the word; and where this gift is, it becomes the pledge, or rather earnest of the farther graces of the Holy Spirit, which the written word is also designed the instrument of deriving to us, and without which our faith shall not save us; for *faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone* (James, ii. 17.); and this gift is the grace of repentance, *a turning from Satan unto God*. (Acts, xxvi. 18.)

The word, which gives us the knowledge of God's love to us, will also be a means of shedding abroad in our hearts, 1. A love towards him; *we shall love him, because he first loved us* (1 John, iv. 19.); and this love will be in us a principle, 2. Of obedience; encouraging us thereto, from an assurance of pardon for our past offences, the promises of aid and assistance beyond the power of our own nature, and the gracious acceptance of our sincere endeavours, though they reach not to a perfect service; *for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments* (1 John, v. 3.). And this love of God engages us, 3. To a love of our brethren: not barely from civil virtue; the praise and beauty of humane actions, the fitness and benefit of social duties; but from the common interest and relation that we all bear to the same Creator, who *has made of one blood all nations* (Acts, xvii. 26.); the common hope we all have in the same Redeemer, who *died for all* (2 Cor. v. 15); and the communion of the same Spirit, which unites us to one head, and makes us one

body. (Eph. ii. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 19.). 4. The same word discovering to us the glories of another life, and the hindrance which this world is in our way to heaven (this world, of whose emptiness, trouble, vanity, and uncertainty long experience had before convinced us); this influences our affections, and draws us off from earth, and *sets them on things above*. (Rom. xii. 2. Col. iii. 2. 1 John, v. 4.)

These are the beginnings and rudiments of the new man, the conceptions of the Christian life: thus are we *begotten again through the gospel* (1 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Pet. i. 3.) which is *the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever*. (1 Pet. i. 23, 25.) But all this is yet short of regeneration; it is only a preparation to the new birth, which is the effect of baptism, when we are *born of water and of the spirit*; and after which the same graces do shoot forth, and unfold themselves into farther degrees, and more perfect measures. But this will be observed more at large hereafter.

At present it will be proper to consider, that though the word be seed, from which these graces germinate and take root in the heart, yet it is but the channel by which the divine graces are conveyed thither. It has not power of itself to work in our understandings a faith in God, nor influence the will to a repentance from dead works, without the aid of the Holy Ghost. It is true there are some historical parts so properly attested, that the mere natural man may find reason to give his assent to the relation; but this is far from divine faith, which is totally exercised about good things not known, but hoped for only; and in believing truths future and out of sight (Heb. xi. 1.), of which we can have no sensible evidence. So again, some moral precepts there delivered may appear so suitable to the present state of things, and our civil and natural relations, that the carnal man may see their beauty and convenience, and act agreeably thereto; but the Christian conversion is the work of God, as it flows from a love of him, a sense of duty and gratitude to him, to the *forsaking fathers and mothers, houses and lands* (Matt. xix. 29.), *to the denying ourselves* (Matt. x.

24.), *keeping under the body* (1 Cor. ix. 27.), *rejoicing in afflictions* (Acts, v. 14. Rom. v. 3. Phil. i. 29. James, i. 3.), throwing up every present good and grateful sensation for the hope of what *neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive* (1 Cor. ii. 9.); things which *the natural man receiveth not, for they are foolishness unto him, neither, though plainly proposed in the written word, can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Thus for instance, when the preacher opens his mouth, we may either indulge nature, by engaging ourselves in secular thoughts, and waste the information; a Felix dismisses Paul with a *Go thy way for this time* (Acts, xxiv. 25.); and a Gallio *careth for none of these things.* (Acts, xviii. 17.) Or we may, by grace, suspend this worldliness for a while, permit our hearts to be diverted to a new care, and *attend to the things spoken.* (Acts, xvi. 14.) After we have given attendance, and have heard our Saviour, or his Apostles, instructing or directing us, we may, either by the aids of grace be of the number of those *blessed, who though they have not seen yet believe* (John, xx. 29.); being convinced upon reasonable evidence that the revelation is from God; and then by a divine faith assenting to those truths, which our natural ideas are too short to reach; readily admitting, that if earthly things are too great for our comprehension, heavenly things (John, iii. 12.) must be more so: or, we may resist this grace, and make natural ideas the standard by which we weigh spiritual objects, properties, or relations, and so continue or relapse into infidelity. The Spirit that unites us to God, and adopts us into his family, may satisfy us of the possibility of being born again; though the carnal man may reject as absurd, that *a man that is old, should enter a second time into his mother's womb.* (John, iii. 4.) When we are told of a future eternity, we may scoff at the discovery, by giving way to our sensual appetites, and choose to *eat and drink, because to-morrow we die* (1 Cor. xv. 32. 35.); mocking at the doctrine of a resurrection with such obvious interrogations, *How are the dead raised up? And with what* ⁴ *do they come?* Others may receive

the grace of God so far, as to suspend their contradiction, though not yet arrived at the gift of faith, and *desire to hear again of this matter.* (Acts, xvii. 32.) And some, through illumination and sanctification of the Spirit, are persuaded that *whosoever liveth and believeth in the Son of God shall never die* (John, xi. 26, 27.); assured from a *knowledge of the scriptures and the power of God* (Matt. xxii. 29.), that *while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord, desirous that this tabernacle may be dissolved* (2 Cor. v. 1—6.), despising the gratifications of sense, and the deceitful arguments it proposes (which others make their oracle and their deity), *groaning earnestly for their spiritual robes, that Christ would transform this vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to that divine, though to us incomprehensible, energy, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.* (Phil. iii. 21.)

In like manner the precepts contained in the written word, require the operation of the Holy Ghost, to give them influence on the will and affections. Precepts which the carnal man rejects as unnatural, and therefore unreasonable to his fleshly wisdom; but towards which the Spirit of holiness, if we will permit ourselves to be led by him, creates in us a new appetite and hunger, till it becomes *our very meat to do the will of God.* (John, iv. 34.) I might produce a great variety of instances, but I think enough has been said for my present purpose, which is to shew, that when the bare letter of the scripture is proposed, to the mere unassisted natural man, his understanding is too weak to apprehend many of its truths, his will and affections too blind and engaged to approve and follow its directions. It may indeed give them human evidence of historical truths, and philosophical arguments for social virtue; but the mystery of godliness, and evangelical purposes, is what we can never embrace, unless the Spirit give power to the latter to work a divine faith in us; without which, *the word preached profits not them that hear.* (Heb. ii. 4.) Our images, *the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the*

waters under the earth (Exod. xx. 4.), can be no fit representatives of God, when grossly understood: our line cannot measure the deep things of God, neither can our shakels justly estimate *an eternal weight of glory*. Such points must indeed be foolishness to the natural man, *seeing, they see, but perceive not; and hearing, they hear, but do not understand*. (Mark, iv. 12.) The Spirit teaches us to discriminate (1 Cor. ii. 15.), and *reveals to babes*, to men of humble, teachable, unprejudiced hearts, things that are *hid from the wise and prudent*. (Matt. xi. 25.)

But though the word be only an instrument, of itself insufficient to illuminate or sanctify the hearer, for *faith is the gift of God* (Eph. ii. 8.); and he it is, *who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phil. ii. 13.); yet it is the instrument by God appointed for the conveyance of the beginnings and first motions of these graces in our hearts; and in the hands of God an instrument sufficient for the end designed. For *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Rom. x. 17.); where the written word is meant, for the Apostle refers to the prophets and the Gospel. And St. Peter informs us, that the gospel *preached* (1 Pet. i. 23. 25.) is the incorruptible seed, of which we are born again. We are not therefore to expect or apply ourselves to dreams and visions, to receive from thence illapses of the Holy Spirit; for whatever extraordinary instances of this kind may happen (God being not tied, as was before observed, to ordinary means though we are), yet these are not the common privileges of the gospel. Joel's prophecy, that it should *come to pass in the last days, that your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams* (Acts, ii. 17.), was, (as St. Peter informs us) fulfilled on that day of Pentecost, when about one hundred and twenty Galileans (on whom the Jews thought the spirit of prophecy never rested), men and women, young and old, saw the appearance of fiery tongues, and spoke as the spirit gave them utterance. The Apostle proceeds to shew the accomplishment of the prophecy then, by characters which are not applicable to

our days. The blessings of these times, is, as he tells us, that *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. (Acts, ii. 21.) And when St. Paul preaches upon that text (Rom. x. 13, &c.), he informs us, that such calling is an effect of the word (not of dreams and visions), and that the word is dispensed by the preachers of the gospel, divinely commissioned (and not by angels or immediate revelations). It is hither our Saviour refers us; *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them*. (Luke, xvi. 29.) And reprehends the fanciful expectations of supernatural evidence, by declaring that it would have no more efficacy (if granted) than that ordinarily appointed mean the written word, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded although one rose from the dead*. (Luke, xvi. 31.) And though the angels may have their charge over us, yet their commission is not to prevent, but forward the ministry of the word. The angel that was sent to Cornelius declared not the Gospel, nor dispensed the Spirit; but directs him only to whom he should go, *to hear words of him; and while Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*. (Acts, x. 6. 22. 44.)

The word then being the instrument by which God conveys the beginnings and principles of faith and Christian life to us, it is our duty to attend to that for it, and not lay it aside, or discredit it as the letter and element only: let us not say with Hosius the Polish bishop, 'We have bid adieu to the scriptures, having seen so many, not only different but contrary interpretations given of them; let us then rather hear God himself speak, than apply ourselves and trust our salvation to these jejune elements: there is no need (as he proceeds) of being skilful in the law and scriptures, but of being taught by God; that labour is ill employed (says he) that is bestowed on the scriptures, for the scripture is a creature, and a poor kind of element.' Thus let papists resolve the truth of God into their pope's infallibility; and let enthusiasts, if they please, lick up their filthy vomit, in favour of their private and extraordinary communications; and

let the modern reasoners and disputers of this world shake hands with their allies, and join in confederacy to set aside the written word, by preferring their own fancies and prejudices to the plainest revelation. But Christ commands us to *search the scriptures* (John, v. 39.); and St. Paul to *give attendance to reading* (1 Tim. iv. 13.); affirming that the scriptures are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) If there have been different, and even contrary interpretations of scripture, let that warn us against the ignorance and obstinacy which have usually occasioned them. Let those who are to teach especially labour by a skill in languages, grammar, criticism, history and antiquity, the Jewish in particular, to understand the plain and primary sense of the letter, though it be a poor jejune element; for it is nevertheless the element without which we shall never attain to that knowledge, which is to make us *wise unto salvation*. And when the letter is obtained, let us learn to distinguish betwixt the spiritual object and the material type which represents it; nor rigidly conclude from symbols, points not drawn into comparison in the text, or supported by other parts of the revelation: taking both the thing signified, and the extent of its analogy, not from one particular representation of it, but view it in its several exhibitions, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. This, with the grace of God assisting his own appointment, will guard us against dangerous errors, though not from mistake in all points. Neither will it help us to a distinct knowledge in spiritual concerns; for from the disproportion betwixt our faculties, and the true objects, we can see then but *as in a glass, darkly, and know only in part*. conducting ourselves by that reflected light, for we walk, *not by vision, but by faith.* (2 Cor. v. 7.)

Without the word, we can bring forth no fruit; if we are not careful to prepare the soil for its reception, it will be ed. and die away; and even when the soil is rightly prepared, the improve-

ment will not be always the same, but God shall cause it to bring forth at his good pleasure, *in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold.* (Mark, iv. 8.)

SERMON XXVI.

By GLOCESTER RIDLEY, LL. B.

The same Subject continued.

TITUS, iii. 5, 6, 7.

—By his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

IN treating of the means which God has appointed for the conveyance of the graces of the Holy Ghost distinct from that which is called common or extra-evangelical, I mentioned three particulars; the written word, and the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper: all which are implied in the general term the Gospel. These three particulars correspond to the three states of the spiritual man, under which he is represented in analogy to the natural man. The first was his conception, to which the written word does peculiarly conduce: how far it is weak, and how far efficacious to this end, was shewn in the last discourse. But conception only is not sufficient to the Christian life, if *when the children are come to the birth, there be no strength to bring forth.* (Isaiah, xxxvii. 3. lxvi. 9.) I proceed therefore to consider,

In the second place, the Christian new birth or regeneration, which is effected by baptism, called in the text *the laver or washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* The law by which was the knowledge of sin, fills the soul with the horrors of guilt, and the dread of punishment; it shews how vile we are, how offensive to the holiness of God, how much we are exposed to his just resentment; the compass of nature contains

no healing medicine that can recover us, *though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap*, (Jer. ii. 22.) it will not cleanse thee: *the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin*. (Heb. x. 4.) Our old man, loaded with diseases and infirmities, finds its footsteps incline unto the dead, but knows no Medea's cauldron to restore it again, and give it its long lost youth and vigour; it despairs of rising with the phoenix from its own ashes, renewed in strength and fresh with life. But our Saviour *brings life and immortality to light through the gospel* (2 Tim. i. 13.); he quiets our fears of the divine vengeance by an assurance of pardon, which he has procured for us by his propitiating blood, that *we may be justified by his grace*; and of new powers that shall be communicated to us, to restore our nature, *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he will shed on us abundantly*; and that the same spirit shall adopt us into the family of God, unite us to him, and make us heirs of eternal life. These are the promises of the gospel, *the glad tidings of peace and salvation*. (Is. lii. 7. Rom. x. 15.) The written word, which contains these promises, is the incorruptible seed in which those graces are folded up that are to produce the future Christian. The preachers are they who are ordinarily appointed to cast the seed into the heart; wherefore St. Paul tells the Corinthians, that in Christ Jesus *he had begotten them through the gospel* (1 Cor. iv. 15.), and calls his convert Onesimus, *his son, whom he had begotten* (Philem. 10.), i. e. converted in bonds at Rome. The travail of the new birth is not in him who is to be born, but (as the scriptures (Gal. iv. 19.) and the fathers represent) in the prayers and groans of the church, and the labours of the catechist. And when the graces latent in the word have unfolded themselves, and produced an hearty sorrow for past sins and a sincere resolution of forsaking them for the future, by renouncing the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, called *repentance from dead works* (Heb. vi. 1.); together with a full assurance of God's philanthropy and reconcileableness to sinners, of atonement and propitiation through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, and of

the assistances of the *Holy Spirit* in his sanctification to future obedience (1 Pet. i. 2.), and sealing us to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that *fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us*. (1 Pet. i. 4.) This prepares us for the new birth, which is effected at our baptism, the *washing of regeneration*. *Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins* (Acts, ii. 38.): *he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*. (Matt. xvi. 6.) The written word shews the malignity of the disease, and the method of cure; but baptism is the salutary application of the medicine.

Its proper effect is, in general, salvation; thus the text informs us, *by mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. And St. Peter speaking of Noah's deliverance, says, *the like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us*. (1-Pet. iii. 21.) And our Saviour assures us, that it is necessary to this end, *except one is born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God*. (John, iii. 3. 5.) The particular graces conferred in baptism, of which salvation consists, are reckoned in the text, 1. Regeneration, and, 2. Renovation.

1. Regeneration; which contains several benefits, such as, 1. The actual grant, and not the promise only of *remission of sins*; cleansing us from the filth and absolving us from the punishment due to them. *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God*. (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Which was done at baptism; whereof Ananias exhorts Paul, *Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*. (Acts, xxii. 16.) This pardon is attendal, 2. with a discharge and freedom from bondage, for *Christ died that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*. (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) And so many of us as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Rom. vi. 3, 4. 6.)

we are delivered from the power of darkness, (Col. i. 13.) and have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the remission of sins. (Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14.) By his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, that we might be justified by his grace. But regeneration is not completed by forgiving only, but in giving also; and contains these farther graces, 3. Adoption, which is the effect of redemption, *for God sent forth his Son, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6.)* This is most properly our regeneration, when we are *born again of the Spirit*, and become *the sons of God, being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John, i. 13.)* Wherefore the catechumens (i. e. persons preparing for baptism, but not yet baptised) were not allowed to say the Lord's prayer, till they had made themselves sons by regeneration in the waters of baptism. This was the privilege and birthright of the baptized, who then had a right to say, *Our Father who art in heaven*, when they were born again to such a Father by water and the Holy Ghost. 4. Inheritance, or a title to eternal life, was the privilege of this adoption. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17.); heirs through hope of eternal life*, as the text expresses it; *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet. i. 4.);* to see and enter which, it is necessarily required that we be so born again. (John, iii. 3. 5.) And of this new birth the Holy Spirit is the witness and the seal; *Ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. (Eph. i. 13, 14.)* But regeneration only is not sufficient; if the same person be born again of water, he is still but *flesh and blood*, and that *cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. xv. 50.)* Our salvation will not be complete unless we are saved from ourselves, as well as from the power of Satan. It is necessary therefore that we become new creatures, (2 Cor. v.

17.) *and be renewed by the Spirit in our minds.*

This is the second principal grace mentioned in the text, as conveyed in baptism; *the washing of regeneration and renovation by the Holy Ghost.* This grace, it is true, necessarily attends the former, for when we are born of the Spirit, we are then changed, and become other persons, *we are transformed, by the renewing of our minds, (Rom. xii. 2.) for what is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John, iii. 6.)* Yet other things are denoted by renovation, than were by regeneration. Such as, getting quit of the rust and corruption of our old nature, putting off the old man with his deeds which is buried with Christ in baptism, and assuming new dispositions and abilities, the beginning to restore us to our original purity and liberty, free from indelible stain, or unconquerable bias or prejudice, *rising with Christ in baptism through the faith of the operation of God, (Col. ii. 12.) putting on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. (Col. iii. 10.)* So that regeneration is our being born again, and made sons of God by our adoption at baptism, together with the privileges which are thereby made over and sealed to us, 'pardon of sins, or justification,' 'redemption from the tyranny of sin and Satan,' and a 'title to a glorious inheritance.' Renovation attends it, but is a still more secret and wondrous work of the divine Spirit, destroying our old form, the character impressed upon the soul by our corrupt nature, and inducing a new one, restoring it to its original image in the likeness of God, giving new light, new desires, new affections; regeneration therefore, as it is more particularly used, is complete at once, and receives no degrees; but renovation is gradual. An entire new form is indeed wrought at first, but so as to be daily capable of improvement, of new graces, of higher perfection, and a still nearer resemblance of the divine original which we are fashioned after. When baptised with fire by the operation of the Spirit, we are changed as the iron, not in essence, but in quality; our dark inflexible temper brightens in the flame, and is made ready to bend to future instruction,

and to receive that perfection which art and care shall afterwards produce. For renovation, as it is ascribed to baptism, which gives it its first spiritual dispositions and capability of receiving the divine image, so also is it represented as the effect of the word written in the prophets and apostles; which supplies suitable arguments for the farther improvement of the understanding, and suitable motives to influence the will, being the *sincere milk to babes* (1 Pet. ii. 2. 1 Cor. iii. 2.), and *strong meat to them that are of full age*. (Heb. v. 14.) Wherefore baptism in which this spirit is administered, which acting like fire gives these new qualities to the soul, was usually called illumination.

These are the graces conveyed in baptism; which yet are not indifferently bestowed, but discreetly dispensed upon conditions. The conditions have been already considered in the former discourse as wrought in our hearts by the ministry of the word; to the producing,

1. An hearty sorrow for sin, and a sincere resolution of forsaking it hereafter, called *conversion or repentance from dead works*: at baptism we are required to testify this conversion by solemnly renouncing the enemy of our salvation the Devil with his great instruments of deceit the affections of the flesh, and the temptations of the world: and as solemnly giving in our names to the service of the true God, engaging *obediently, to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life*. Whence baptism was called the *sacrament of conversion*, and is, according to St. Peter, the *answer or stipulation of a good conscience*. (1 Pet. iii. 21.) So that, although he saves us *not by works of righteousness which we have done*, yet he requires that we engage ourselves to perform works of righteousness hereafter, before he will so far receive us into favour as to regenerate and renew us by baptism: which shews the necessity of good works, and that the performance of them is a subsequent condition of that justification which we obtain in baptism. But we are not only to testify our conversion, but,

2dly, Ratify our faith by an open profession of our belief of the great eco-

nomy of our salvation, in the reconciliation of the Father, the satisfaction of the Son, and the aids of the Holy Ghost; to be sought for and obtained in the holy Catholic church; for these ends and purposes, the forgiveness of sins, and the inheritance of eternal life. These are the points invariably mentioned in all the ancient creeds; afterwards more fully opened and explained, as the corrupt interpretations of heretics gave occasion. Whence baptism was also called the sacrament of faith, and was supposed to be, on our part, a sealing to the truth of such articles: and the forgiveness of sins being one of these articles which we are required to seal to as the great end of baptism, it follows, either that every one in the church is capable of it; or if there are any persons in the church, who are reprobated from eternity independent of their own behaviour, such persons, when admitted, are required by God to believe what is not true. This stipulation is essentially requisite not only in adults, but also in the sponsors for infants: as it is the best compensation for the want of that actual faith and repentance, of which as infants are incapable, so if there was no method of conveying the benefits and privileges of them, they would be also incapable of salvation. But till they can square their wills to the true meaning of their engagements, baptism, by communicating that same Spirit, which is the author of those graces in the susceptrors, 'will avail to their preservation against all contrary powers; so that if they depart this life before the use of reason, they will by this Christian remedy of the sacrament itself (the charity of the church recommending them) be made free from that condemnation which by one man entered into the world.' If they live, the Spirit, like the reason of their own souls, of which they are also unconscionous, is in them, as a spark raked up, which will kindle as they grow in years. Wherefore infants being thus capable of the Spirit, which even the adversaries of infant-baptism allow; and capable of salvation, which our Saviour says is not attainable but by those who are born again of water and the Spirit; we infer not the lawfulness only, but the expediency of baptizing infants: and so the church

uniformly understood that text in St. John till Calvin introduced a new interpretation. And the stipulation of a good conscience being required, we charitably admit the stipulation of sponsors, agreeable to the practice of the Jewish baptism, at that time when our Saviour instituted his, without any notice of an abrogation or disallowance of this part, nor can we find any interruption of this practice in the Christian church.

After the Christian's birth, there is his manhood also; when he becomes fit for service, when he is called upon to bear a part in the Christian warfare, and *to fight the good fight of faith* (1 Tim. vi. 12.) for which, greater measures of grace are necessary, to furnish and arm him with the *weapons of his warfare*. (2 Cor. x. 4.) For this purpose he is brought before the chief officer in the church militant appointed for the dispensation of spiritual gifts, that he may there renew and confirm those engagements, which he entered into at his baptism, before a subordinate, and perhaps not in his own person; and receive, by solemn prayer and invocation, those large effusions of the Holy Ghost, as shall give him the spirit of ghostly strength to combat the temptations with which the world now assaults him, and with which the concupiscence of his nature, not totally eradicated, prompts him to comply: the spirit of wisdom to escape the fascination of his own judgment, now beginning to open and fall in love with its own charms, and all those manifold gifts of grace, which will prove *mighty through God to the casting down imaginations or carnal reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*. (2 Cor. x. 5.) The episcopal laying on of hands and benediction thus perfects our baptism; establishes, roots, and confirms us in the faith in which we were before planted; anoints us, as proselytes are presumed to have been after baptism, when taken entirely under the wings of the divine majesty; seals or enlists us, as the soldiers stigma, into God's militia; and gives the Spirit as an earnest, that nothing shall be wanting on God's part, which our situations and

necessities require, where we are not wanting to ourselves; knits us together in the unity of the Spirit; completes our insertion into the church, and is a pledge of our union and communion with it. (Thus our Saviour was confirmed by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost after his baptism (Matt. iii. 16.): the apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts, ii. 4.): the new converted church at that time baptized, received afterwards the plentiful effusions of the Spirit by the invocation of the apostles (Acts, iv. 31.): the gentile converts baptized by Philip, had the Holy Ghost poured out upon them by the laying on of hands by *Peter and John*. (Acts, viii. 14, 15, 16.) And when Paul had laid his hands on the Ephesian disciples, (whether Jews or Gentiles, who had been baptized, either immediately before by some assistant of Paul, or long before by *John the Baptist*;) *the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied* (Acts, xix. 6.), as the occasions of the times then required. The same practice has been continued without any evidence of interruption in every age of the church by episcopal confirmation, giving to every one an earnest of such spiritual supplies, as their own, or the church's exigencies should from time to time make necessary. Thus by these several means the Christian is *first conceived, then born, and at length comes to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man*. (Eph. iv. 13.)

But it is not sufficient that we are born, and arrive at maturity; it is farther necessary that the Christian life be supported, and health maintained. The sacrament therefore of the Lord's supper was ordained to answer the end of spiritual *food and medicine*. (John, vi. 55.)

1. Of food; 'If our bodies, says Mr. Hooker, did not daily waste, food to restore them were a thing superfluous; and it may be that the grace of baptism would serve to eternal life, were it not that our state of spiritual being is daily so much hindered and impaired after baptism. While we are subject to diminution, and capable of augmentation in grace, this sacrament is necessary.' *The cup of blessing, St. Paul tells us, is the*

communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is the communion of the body of Christ. (1 Cor. x. 16.) And our Saviour himself assures us of what efficacy and use they are, when he tell us, that his flesh is *meat indeed*, and his blood is *drink indeed*. (John, vi. 55.) Whence Tertullian represents the end of receiving this sacrament, to be, that the soul may feast upon or be fattened with God; or as it may be expressed with more delicacy in the language of the psalmist, it is a means by which God *satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.* (Ps. cvii. 9.) For the bread, says Origen, is by prayer made the body of Christ, sacred itself, and sanctifying those who worthily receive it. While it retains a bodily substance in outward appearance, its almighty efficacy manifests the presence of a divine power in it. The cravings of the soul, which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, is nourished thereby; the languid, conscious and afraid of human infirmities, receives strength and vigour to pursue his course, and go on to perfection: the weak and weary, faint with struggling with temptations, and ready to sink under them, are staid and comforted with this divine refreshment: the sorrowful, and afflicted at this world's misfortunes, have the wings of their affections trimmed and disengaged, to soar above carnal thoughts, and leave their cares behind them: all the graces which we had before obtained, but through human weakness since impaired, are here, as our several wants require, renewed, strengthened, or improved. Nor is it our food only, but,

2. Our medicine also; this world is but a kind of hospital whither we are sent for cure; and when that is perfected, we are discharged: so that while we continue, we have some degrees or dregs of the disease remaining, and in perpetual need of the great physician of souls. Our Saviour indeed bespeaks the sinner in baptism, as he did the impotent man healed at Bethesda, *Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* (John, v. 14.) But when our consciences accuse us of many subsequent offences, from surprise, daily incursions, and even voluntary sins, it must also suggest to us fears, lest that,

as we have broke the covenant, we should also forfeit the benefit of it, and thereby have incurred God's heavier displeasure. Wherefore it is as necessary, I mean on man's part, for his satisfaction, that the assurance of pardon should be repeated frequently for fresh offences, and the renewal of his own engagements certified after revolt in such a manner as God will accept, as it was at first before such revolt and forfeiture: so that it is of great use to the soul wounded with the serpent's bite, to have a *sign of salvation*, and to put them in remembrance of the commandment of the law. (Wisd. xvi. 6.) That by *shewing forth the Lord's death till he come* (1 Cor. xi. 26.) they might have in perpetual remembrance his body given for them (Luke, xxii. 19.), and his blood shed for the remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28.), and by partaking thereof by faith, may apply the benefit of the remedy to himself; not by any charm in the bread and wine: for what was said of the brazen serpent, may be justly applied to this outward symbol in the Lord's supper, *he that turneth himself towards it, was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by Thee that art the Saviour of all.* (Wisd. xvi. 7.)

Yet lest the frequent repetitions of pardon should prove an encouragement to sin, the church denied the benefit of eucharistical absolution to those whose sins were very grievous in kind, continued in, or highly aggravated: and even in cases where the charity of the church admitted them, the pardon was looked on as not so perfect as that granted at baptism: the one entirely renewed; the other healed indeed, but left a weakness and a scar behind, which required more care for the future, and larger effusions of grace to strengthen and wear off. To these two effects procured by means of this sacrament, I mean strengthening and restoring grace,

A third is added, the gift of immortality; a promise of it was given in the written word; a title to it was sealed in baptism; but this still more disposes and prepares us for it, as a preservative against the corruption of sin and Satan.

It is one great mean of participating of him, who is life itself. *I, says our Saviour, am the bread of life, which came*

down from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. (John, xi. 25.) *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John, vi. 48. 51. 54.) For it is impossible, says Irenæus, that our bodies should continue in the grave, which have been nourished by the body and blood of Christ. This was by the operation of the Holy Ghost, whom, in the ancient liturgies, they invoked to descend on the symbols, and make the bread the body of Christ, and the wine the blood of Christ. Yet they held that what was eaten was indeed bread, though the virtue in that bread was to vivification; and while the cup invited to taste, the spirit that accompanied it led to immortality.

But what are food and medicine to him that cannot breathe? Inspiration and expiration are continued signs and means of life. The true Christian therefore must *open his mouth, and draw in the Spirit.* (Ps. cxix. 131.) The Holy Ghost first inspires us with the *spirit of supplications* (Zach. xii. 10.), which when received, we must breathe out again in prayers for continual supplies of grace, which being according to the direction of the spirit and *the will of God* (Rom. viii. 26, 27.) will be a most effectual means of obtaining them; *for if ye be- ing evil know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (Luke, xi. 13.) This is an exercise without which the Christian cannot live at all; he must *pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. v. 17.), *continue in prayer* (Col. iv. 2.): *men ought always to pray, and not to faint* (Luke, xviii. 1.); never remit that devout frame and disposition of soul, which is always open to receive the divine influences, and comply with its motions; expecting from our heavenly Father every good thing we want, directing all our actions in obedience to his will, and to his glory. This according to Origen, is to *pray without ceasing*, for a good life is the Christian's great and continual prayer. In which we must never wilfully omit the daily stated opportunities of what is more properly and strictly called Praying: nay, if unavoidably interrupted, we may express

our earnest desires in short and quick ejaculations, which are the pantings of the soul after God: and even in cases where the sense of danger almost overcomes us, and the proper means of escape and deliverance are so hidden, that we know not what to pray for, the soul has still this relief, it may send forth its groans unuttered, and the Spirit will be present to help our infirmities, and make effectual intercession *to him who searcheth the heart, and knoweth the mind of the spirit.* (Rom. viii. 27.) But we must not confine ourselves to our closets in private prayer; we must walk abroad, and seek those public places where this Spirit breathes more freely, or descends in more abundance: and this is the sanctuary or place of public worship. There rested the cloud (Exod. xl. 34. 1 Kings, viii. 10.), as it were in token of a plentiful effusion: he visits every place: there is no going from this Spirit; but his Shekinah, his *dwelling*, and *resting place* (Psalms, cxxxii. 15.) is here. The Jews have a saying, that whosoever two or three are sitting together, and conferring together about the law, there the Shekinah will be with them. Which our Saviour has confirmed with regard to prayer, saying, *If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I* (by his Spirit) *in the midst of them.* (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.) How great a lover of agreement and harmony this uniting Spirit is, what an enemy to dividing and separating, we may learn from his making the congregation the seat where he delights to dwell: his most extraordinary effusion was, when the whole Christian church was met together on the day of Pentecost, when *the disciples were all with one accord in one place.* (Acts, ii. 1.) He accompanies the sacrament of water, *to baptize us into one body.* (1 Cor. xii. 13.) He blesses the sacramental bread, *that we being many may by partaking of it be one loaf and one body.* (1 Cor. x. 17.) This love of unity was as evident under the Mosaic dispensation; all were to meet once a year at Jerusalem; and when their dispersion prevented this, they are represented as

dry bones scattered in the valley. (Ezek. xxxvii. 1. 7. 10.) It is promised indeed that they shall be restored again to life, which was the promise of *standing* the Holy Ghost in the days of the Messiah, under the gospel dispensation, but in order to this, the emblem relates, that the bones were to come together first, bone to his bone, before the breath would come into them and make them live.

I do not mention orders, not only because, like confirmation, it is but a more solemn kind of prayer and invocation, and so might pass under that head; but because it is not properly the means of deriving sanctifying grace to the receiver, which confirmation is; its peculiar end being to convey the gift of office and ability; and which has fallen in my way to be treated of already.

The providence of God in his judgments, his trials, and his mercies, are also sometimes considered as means of grace; but perhaps they might more properly be called seasons and occasions, kindly dispensed by God for the exercise and unfolding those graces which had been before administered by other means. However, if means, they are such as God has entirely reserved in his own hands, and are not in the power of the church to dispense. Wherefore they are not reckoned among the means of gospel, but of extra-evangelical grace, common to every man as well without as within the church, and which it is no part of our duty, as Christians, to seek after, but to be careful to make a proper use of, when it shall please God to visit us with them.

I have now attended the Christian from the womb to his consummation; viewed the principles and rudiments of grace, and watched them as they gradually expanded into more and more perfect degrees of holiness, preparing the receiver for an *eternal weight of glory*. (2 Cor. iv. 17.) Operations so superior to nature, so remote from our apprehensions, that as few are rash enough to pretend to explain, so neither are there very many found who care to attend even to what is revealed concerning them. But the happy subject in whom they are wrought, knows them to be the work of God: he experiences that there is a new

creation (2 Cor. v. 17.), and a resurrection from the dead (Eph. ii. 5, 6.), effects disproportioned to the visible means employed; whence he has a lively sense and demonstration within him of those several points, which have been laid down as the general heads of discourse in this lecture.—He knows many great and invaluable advantages in the present *fruits of the Spirit* (Gal. v. 22.), besides the *hope* (Tit. iii. 7.), nay more, the *earnest* (Eph. i. 14.) of an heavenly inheritance.—He has a certainty that he has *received the Holy Ghost*; and that the same blessed Spirit dwells within him, by the motions and continuance of his graces (Rom. viii. 13.), in a full assurance of pardon (Col. ii. 13.), in an unfeigned love of God (Rom. v. 15.), and of his brother (1 John, iv, 12, 13.), in new desires, new affections, new dispositions which transform his mind (Rom. xii. 2.), and alienate him from this world (Col. iii. 1, 2.), lifting it upwards to that which is above. These mighty works within him are so many proofs of the divinity of the power by whom they are wrought, and not justify only, but require worship from him to the divine Author. It is certainly our duty to look up to the hand from which we receive such benefits, and begin our grateful and devout acknowledgements as St. Paul does, by mentioning first the immediate giver, *there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*. (1 Cor. xii. 4.) Let us beseech him that he would continue, and make his abode with us, beautify our souls with every virtue, enlighten them with every grace, cleanse them from all filthiness and corruption, and strengthen them to immortality! Yet let us not rest here, since the same Spirit teaches us for whose sake, and by whose purchase, and according to whose will, as the economy of salvation requires, these gifts and graces are administered. *There are diversities of administration, but the same Lord*. And as *through him, by the Spirit, we have access to the Father* (Eph. ii. 18.), from whom originally comes *every good and perfect gift* (James, i. 17.), all divine power and efficacy, *there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, that worketh all in all*: therefore with a due sense of this great honour

and privilege, as sons of God, let us address ourselves to him for pardon, and admission to our heavenly inheritance, 'O God the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!' But as we have no deserts of our own, no works of righteousness to claim his favour by, and are entitled only through the sufferings and satisfaction of Christ, let us beseech him to intercede for us, and plead his merits with the Father, 'O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!' And since the benefits of his merits are applied, and our pardon sealed, and ourselves enabled to render an acceptable service only by the operations and assistances of the Holy Spirit, let us implore his aid also, 'O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!' Yet remembering that, how various soever the economy may be, salvation is the one sole undivided end and work of all, therefore to them as the one sole undivided cause of all, let us address our earnest prayers and invocations as to the great Power to whom we have consecrated ourselves and services, 'O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God have mercy upon us miserable sinners!' And to this holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, for the means of grace by them vouchsafed to us, and for the hopes of glory hereafter, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, majesty, and dominion, all praise and adoration, both now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

By JOHN BALGUY, M. A.

On the Excellence and Immortality of the Human Soul.

EccLES. xli. part of the 7th verse.

And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

THIS chapter begins with an exhortation to youth, to season their minds with an early sense of God and their duty; that it may direct them in all their ways, and be a support and comfort to them in the

declension of life. The wise preacher, shews the folly of deferring the thoughts of religion, and the improvement of men's minds, to their latter days. He is so far from looking upon old age as a proper season for the accomplishment of this great work, that he represents it as scarce able to bear its own weight: and then describes, in a noble allegory, its various infirmities and gradual decays, till it terminate in death and dissolution. Next he pursues the soul and body after their separation, points out the fate and lot of both, and traces them to their respective originals. *The dust, says he, shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* That is, the body shall dissolve into that earth of which it was first composed, and be incorporated with it; but the soul, being of a higher and nobler nature, will survive the separation, and return into the hands of its Creator, to give an account of itself, and be by him treated and dealt with according to the condition and circumstances in which he shall find it. My text is therefore a plain and positive declaration of a future state; and, by probable consequence, of the perpetuity of that state; which are therefore to be the subjects of the following discourse. And what can be more worthy of our inquiry and concern? Of all questions that can possibly come under our consideration, the most important is, Whether there be not another life after this? Whether we are to die like brute beasts that have no understanding, or to live again in a future state, and exist for ever? These are points of such vast moment, such infinite consequence, that they necessarily demand every man's most serious attention. In other pursuits we may be engaged by a principle of curiosity, or the love of truth, or perhaps some particular interest: but on the resolution of these points depends our all; for so indeed it is upon the comparison. If death make an utter end of us, and we have no prospect beyond it, this life may be looked upon as a mere shadow, or a dream not worth regarding. But perhaps it will be asked, what occasion there is to examine a question that we find already determined to our hands: for does not revelation assure us of a future state? and are not life

and immortality fully brought to light in the gospel? This is very true; but still the proofs and evidences of natural reason deserve to be considered; partly to arm our minds against the objections of unbelievers, and enable us to promote their conviction; and partly for the support and confirmation of our own faith. And indeed it cannot but give satisfaction to every rational Christian, to find that the doctrines of that revelation which he has embraced, are perfectly agreeable to the natures of things, and the reason of his own mind. Let us then briefly consider the great doctrine of a future state in this light, and see what indications, what evidence, we can discover by it. In order thereto, it will be requisite to consider—the nature of a human soul—the present condition and circumstances of mankind—and the moral perfections of our Maker. I begin with inquiring into the nature and frame of a human soul; concerning which let it be observed, in the

First place, that it plainly appears to be a simple, uncompounded, indivisible substance. All matter is evidently composition; every part or parcel of it being an endless combination or heap of substances; and, by consequence, necessarily liable to dissolution and corruption: for the particles whereof it consists are always unavoidably subject to disunion and separation; and accordingly hence it comes to pass, that every system of matter is broken up in time, and sooner or later moulders away. But that the soul; not thus compounded, is manifest from all its perceptions, and all its operations; as might be shewn at large, were not such arguments too abstracted for the present occasion. The soul then being an uncompounded, single substance, can admit of no division or dissolution; and from hence it clearly follows, that it is and must be incorruptible. But how incorruptible? May not God annihilate it whenever he pleases? Doubtless he may: and the same may be said of the whole creation. Whether it be probable that he will do so, is to be inquired and considered afterwards. In the mean time, we may safely conclude from the foregoing consideration, that the soul is not capable of being destroyed by second

causes; which is all that the present argument pretends to prove. But,

Secondly, Another argument, drawn from the nature of the soul, is the excellence of those powers and faculties which God has given it. But having particularly considered this point in the foregoing discourse, it will be needless to resume it here, nor shall I repeat. It may be sufficient to point out, in a few words, where the force of the argument lies. Since God has endued us with intellectual and moral capacities; those great and sublime powers, which dignify our nature, and render us partakers of the divine image; it can never be supposed, with the least colour of probability, that he should confine us to the short span of this present life; and intend us, in a few years, to perish for ever. Since the soul of man is so highly exalted, and so nobly framed and furnished, it must, in all likelihood, be designed for a very different duration, as well as a more perfect state. Especially if we consider,

Thirdly, That we neither do nor can arrive in this life at that perfection, and maturity, of which our natures are manifestly capable. All the creatures beneath us seem to attain their full perfection in their present state; I mean, to rise to the height of their respective capacities. But this appears far from being the case of human souls. Even those men that have the largest abilities, and fairest opportunities, and make the best use of them, neither do nor can accomplish their minds to the extent of their faculties. They can neither obtain that measure of knowledge, nor those degrees of virtue, nor that portion of happiness, whereof they are capable. Part of human life is spent before the first dawns of reason; and a great part of it passed before we reach any ripeness of understanding. To which may be added, the disadvantages and decays that commonly attend men in the last stage of life. And how short, how scanty, is the intermediate term for the culture of our minds, and the improvement of our faculties? Yet short as it is, a great part of it is unavoidably taken up in providing for the occasions of our bodies, and answering the demands of sense. Are we then so framed, as

barely to be allowed just to taste the sweets of knowledge, and the satisfactions of truth? Are these desirable objects set before our eyes to engage our affections, and excite our longings; and as soon almost as we understand the worth of them, to be snatched away from us for ever? Was the soul formed with such large capacities, for such small improvements, and so inconsiderable a duration? Was it fitted for a perpetual progress, and an endless growth; and yet designed to be cut off, as it were, in its infancy, and perish almost at its first setting out? For, in truth, the understandings of men in this life, appear only to be in their infant state; as being doubtless capable of exceeding their present attainments, as much as the knowledge of grown men exceeds that of children. Again: The measure of man's virtues and moral graces is no less imperfect and defective, supposing him as careful and diligent about them as he ought to be; yet even on this supposition he could be no very great proficient. Considering the patterns that men have to copy after, and the perfections they have to imitate, a whole eternity may seem requisite for accomplishing their minds, and completing their improvements: or, to speak more properly, they can never be completed; because they will ever be capable of further degrees, and higher advancement. Besides, we contract in our first years such an attachment to our senses and appetites, and such a fondness for their respective objects, that the remainder of our lives is seldom sufficient to disengage ourselves, and recover a right bias; much less for arriving at a state of perfection. In short, we have so many indispositions to remove, so many disorders to rectify, so many evil habits to shake off, and so many good ones to introduce and establish; that the best men can only be considered as beginners and probationers in virtue: so far are they from being able to perfect their natures. Can it then be supposed, that God should have ordained us only to make an entrance into the paths of wisdom and virtue, or, at the utmost, a very short and precarious progress, and then totally disappear, and drop into oblivion! When we have just

found our feet, and learned to guide our steps, must we then be struck down, to rise no more! Can these be the fruits of our moral endeavours, and religious improvements? No man can possibly believe it, till he have quite forgotten who it is that governs the world; as will further appear afterwards. And since man's virtue is thus imperfect in this life, his happiness must needs be so too: for as to outward goods, they are little more than shadows of true bliss. The enjoyments of this world are empty, and unsatisfactory, as well as uncertain; and the whole train of our pursuits is, in reality, a succession of disappointments. Such objects are not big enough to answer our faculties. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing*; and much less is the mind in possession of its wishes. Since then we cannot find true and solid satisfaction in this state; since we *walk in a vain shew, and disquiet ourselves in vain*; we may hence derive just hopes of better success in another. If God created us in order to partake of the overflowings of his felicity, that end neither is, nor ever can be, effectually answered here; where little more is allowed us than a bare glimpse of happiness, and that at a distance. And who can imagine, after we have acted, or endeavoured to act, a short part in the theatre of the world, that the great business of life should then be finished, and the scene shuts up for ever?

Fourthly: Another indication appearing in the nature and frame of our minds, is that earnest desire of immortality, which so uniformly and universally prevails. A future state, and that a perpetual one, is the object of every man's wish; his only excepted, who is so obstinately and desperately guilty, as to dread the vengeance of Heaven; and upon that account, and that only, to wish himself out of being. And even in this case, the desire of existence is far from being extinguished. It still operates, however over-ruled by the terrors of his prospect. But to proceed: I am not supposing that the desire here spoken of was, like many others, actually planted in our minds by the Author of nature, a supposition as needless, as it seems to be groundless;

for the love of natural good being necessary and unavoidable, in order to obtain that good, the desire of existence must consequently be so too. I mean, that it must take place, whenever there is happiness in expectation : for in this case, the desire of existence necessarily results from the frame and constitution of nature. How then, or which way, does it amount to an argument of a future state? Had the Creator implanted this desire in our minds, it might readily have been concluded that he would not fail to gratify it; but how can such a consequence be drawn from a desire confessedly necessary? I answer, that it is as full and forcible a proof in this case, as in the other; for to frame our minds, and fix the nature and constitution of things, in such a manner, as must necessarily produce this desire, is, in effect, the same thing as if he had actually and directly formed the desire itself. And therefore it is not to be supposed, in either case, that he should subject us to inevitable delusion and disappointment. Had he intended us nothing beyond this life, he would never have drawn us irresistibly into such false hopes, and fallacious desires. Besides; were the necessity of this desire to be considered as absolute, and every way independent of the divine will, still the argument would hold good: for whatever is absolutely necessary, must be just and right in itself; and, by consequence, an object of God's approbation. But,

Fifthly, That the soul of man will survive this present life, may be further argued from the strength of those benevolent affections which God has planted in it, affections that knit mankind together, and produce all the sacred ties of affinity, consanguinity, and friendship. These affections improved and heightened in virtuous characters, by a continual exchange of good offices, by real worth, mutual complacency, and reciprocal esteem, form that union of minds, that sacred tie of friendship, which adorns and dignifies our species, and contributes so highly to the honour and the happiness of human life. The root of it lies deep in our nature, and the strongest principles within us concur to lead us into it. What mean then such propensions and dispositions? And whence comes it to

pass, that we are so many ways prompted to strengthen these bands, and draw them as close as possible? If this present state, where our *days are only as an hand-breadth*, and *our life vanisheth as a vapour*, be the whole of our existence, it must seem extremely hard to account for the principles and provisions we are speaking of. Can men be required by the impulses of nature, and the precepts of virtue, to form such close and cordial confederacies; to build up the fairest and firmest friendships, whose *foundations are in the dust*? When death divides the nearest relations, and the dearest friends, what is it that renders such a separation tolerable, and administers real support and consolation? Is it not the expectation of meeting again in another and a better world? But if this life was our all, and death our utter destruction, how dreadful, how insupportable would it be? How would it rack men's hearts to see before their eyes a total dissolution both of friends and friendship; and to find themselves just parting, never to meet more? Had therefore our Maker designed us for this life only, he would, in all probability, have given us cooler affections, and weaker attachments; and thereby have prevented the terrible anxieties above-mentioned. And indeed such strong ligaments can never be fit for creatures of so short a duration. Again: We find in our minds a powerful principle of gratitude towards benefactors; more especially our *Supreme*, the author and giver of all good. Him we are bound, by all the ties of nature, and reason, and religion, to reverence and *love with all our hearts, and with all our souls*. We are every way excited, by a due contemplation of his infinite perfections, to frame the most amiable ideas of him, and to work up our minds to the highest pitch of esteem and veneration; to consider the greatness of his power, the excellence of his majesty, the depth of his wisdom, and the glory of his goodness; how many and various his benefits, how diffusive and constant his bounty; till our thoughts are filled, and our hearts enflamed, with the lustre and beauty, and grandeur, of the object; and all our faculties conspire to engage and fix us in the admiration of it. And to what end these mighty obli-

gations and powerful attractions? Why must we exert our faculties, and raise our affections, to the highest pitch, in meditating on the Supreme Being, and admiring and adoring his boundless perfections, if, after a very imperfect acquaintance, all our hopes are at an end, and the holy flame is soon to expire, and be extinguished for ever? Could so great and important a preparation be required for any purposes of this short state? Or would our bountiful Creator bring us into being, fit us for a participation of the sovereign good, and when we had just begun to taste it, snatch us away, and reduce us to our original nothing? Had he intended us for this life only, he would rather have concealed from us as much as possible, this glorious object, than set it before us, and draw us to it, to so very little purpose. We may safely, therefore, conclude, that such natural propensions and tendencies plainly point out another state, and can never end in frustration and disappointment. Were it otherwise, an acquaintance with God would be so far from yielding us peace and comfort, that it would afflict us beyond measure, and drive us into utter despair.

Sixthly, and lastly, Another proof, and that a very obvious one, arises from the suggestions of conscience; which is continually foreboding a future state, and urging it powerfully on the minds of men. It speaks so clearly and constantly in behalf thereof, and is so plain and peremptory in its declarations, that its testimony ought not to be rejected; and indeed cannot, without great violence done to the frame and constitution of our own minds. The soul of man is not only apt to smart under a sense of guilt, but is also liable to secret misgivings, and painful apprehensions of what is to follow. When a man has notoriously violated the laws of Heaven, or the dictates of right reason, his conscience not only rebukes him for it, but is frequently spreading before his eyes the terrors of futurity, and the sad apprehensions of a miserable doom. On the other hand, when a man has maintained his innocence, and held fast his integrity; when he has carefully discharged his duty, and lived up to the dignity of his nature; his

conscience not only applauds him for it, but cheers his heart with assurances of a future recompense, and pleasing expectations of a happy hereafter. Now, if there be no real foundation for these things; if this man's hopes, and the other man's fears, are altogether groundless and chimerical; what account is to be given of either? How came they to spread so wide, and be so deeply rooted in human nature? This argument seems equally conclusive, whether we mean by conscience merely the operation of our intellectual faculty, or an instinctive principle superadded thereto: for, upon either supposition, we are manifestly so framed, as naturally and unavoidably to fall into such a persuasion, and fix in it. Nay, when sin and wickedness have made it men's interest to shake it off, and to wish and strive against it as much as possible, they can seldom or never accomplish it. The expectation of a future state sticks fast in their minds; haunting and terrifying them, in spite of all their arts and endeavours to the contrary. Whatever means may be used, conscience is never to be quite silenced; and very often it speaks so loudly and awfully, as to startle the sinner, and makes him tremble in the midst of his vicious pursuits and criminal enjoyments. What then can be the meaning of these natural anticipations? If there be nothing to come hereafter, how strangely is man amused, and how unaccountably misled? All appearances without him, and every principle within him, conspire to deceive him. If the grave was his utmost limit, why should he find himself under a necessity of looking beyond it? to what end were such clear prospects opened, and such strong expectations kindled? by what strange fate is he compelled to walk in a vain shew, and disquiet himself in vain? But the truth is, such a supposition is destitute of all manner of foundation; as being directly repugnant both to the nature of God and man; as will further appear hereafter. Whatever conscience presages, whatever uncorrupted reason suggests, may securely be relied on, and considered as the voice of him, who can never disappoint his creatures, or falsify those expectations which he has given them. And indeed it is impiety

to suppose, that Infinite Wisdom cannot govern the world without the help of fallacy and fiction.

* This argument, drawn from natural conscience, will appear yet stronger, if we consider the extent and universality of it. It is not a notion or an impulse that prevails here and there; at some certain times, and some particular parts of the world; the voice of it has been heard in all ages, and in all nations, and its convictions spread over the face of the whole earth: scarce an exception to be found even among the most uncivilized and barbarous people. There is, indeed, and has been all along, a great difference in men's ideas of a future state, according to the lights received among them, and the degrees of their improvement; but the doctrine itself, in some dress or other, has universally prevailed. Which plainly shews it to be, in the strictest sense of the word, natural; as arising from the frame and constitution of our minds, and the genuine principles of humanity. Was it not founded on nature, and perfectly agreeable to unprejudiced reason, how should it ever be so deeply rooted in the minds of men? even of the best and wisest men, in a more peculiar manner; and those too destitute of supernatural light, and the benefit of revelation. This consideration may be justly accounted a strong presumption in behalf of the doctrine before us. For certainly it would be very strange, if men's minds were so framed and turned, that even the wisest and worthiest of them should naturally run into such sentiments concerning this matter, as had no foundation in truth or nature. What should give mankind such an invincible bias to error, such an universal tendency to delusion? The more we consider these things, the more we shall be at a loss to give any account of them, but what either supposes, or must terminate in, the truth and reality of a future state.

SERMON XXVIII.

The same Subject continued.

ECCLES. xii. part of the 7th verse.

And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

IN a former discourse on these words, I proposed to consider briefly the proofs

and evidences of a future state, arising from natural reason; and began with those arguments which are plainly deducible from the frame and constitution of our own minds. This head being then dispatched, what now remains to be inquired into, is the present condition and circumstances of mankind, considered relatively and in connection with the known attributes and perfections of the Deity. I shall give a short account of each, as far as our subject is concerned; and, having laid down the facts, produce the argument, and point out the conclusion, which naturally flows from them.

As to the present condition and circumstances of mankind, the fact is plainly as follows: We find from daily experience, and general observation, that there is no regular distribution of good and evil in this life: in many respects, *all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.* Though virtue naturally tends to happiness, and vice is naturally productive of misery, yet in this world neither of these effects constantly happens: many things concurring to hinder both the one and the other. We see that good men are exposed to various hardships and misfortunes; which, on numberless occasions, they are forced to undergo. So far they oftentimes are from being happy, as might be hoped and expected, that they are deeply distressed and greatly miserable; so far from reaping the proper fruits of their virtue, as to suffer like evil-doers, and be compassed about with a sad variety of wretchedness. Nay, it has too often happened, that their very virtue has been the occasion of their sufferings, and the accidental cause of all their calamities. On the other hand, wicked men often prosper and flourish in the midst of their iniquities; not only escaping the forementioned hardships, but abounding in all the pleasures and enjoyments of life. Nay, their very wickedness is sometimes the occasion of their prosperity; and a great part of their lives is perhaps a continued scene of successful vice and triumphant villainy. All ages and countries abound in instances of both these kinds, and the observation is familiar and common among men—so promiscuously and irregularly are

good and evil dispensed here below! And indeed this has been at all times so remarkable, that many ill-advised men have rashly taken occasion from hence to call in question either Divine Providence, or the Divine Perfections: but on very weak grounds, as will be seen afterwards.

In the mean time, however difficult it may have been to account for the providential dispensations of this life, most certain it is, that God's moral character is, and must be, perfectly clear and unspotted; he necessarily approves virtue, and disapproves vice, because the one is essentially amiable, and the other absolutely odious in its own nature. Conformably hereto, he is perpetually directed by the sacred rule of truth and moral fitness in all his proceedings, and in all his dealings with his creatures. A Being of infinite wisdom must, at all times, infallibly act according to the reasons of things, and the right of every case, because there is always a motive, a powerful motive, for so doing, arising from the intrinsic worth and excellence of such actions; and because, on the other hand, there can be no possible motive to induce God, on any occasion, to deviate from this divine rule.—Frail man indeed is very much governed by affections and passions, and those, alas! often irregular: but his Maker, being entirely void of all affection, can only be influenced by reason and rectitude; from which there is nothing to withdraw him, and to which he is therefore immoveably attached. The consequence of which is, the perfect righteousness of his government, and the inviolable equity of all his dispensations. Two other particulars relating to our subject I shall only just mention, as being universally acknowledged and understood: the one is, that God is privy to our whole conduct, and intimately acquainted with all our thoughts, words, and actions; and the other, that the lot and condition of every creature is altogether dependent on him; good and evil being lodged in his hands, and his power of dispensing them absolute and uncontrollable.—These truths being premised, I shall now endeavour to shew how we are to argue from them, in order to a clear and satisfactory proof of the great point

before us: and here we shall find, that, supposing our souls to perish with our bodies, the whole scene of things here below is utterly unaccountable, and indeed directly repugnant to the moral perfection of the Deity.

If then virtue be in itself really better and more deserving than vice, it undeniably follows, that good men have a better title to favour than wicked men; their conduct being intrinsically more amiable and meritorious. And that virtue is really thus preferable, is, to all intelligent beings, as evident as the difference between light and darkness: and if to all intelligent beings, much more to the Supreme, whose eye is perfectly pure, and his judgment unprejudiced and infallible. Virtue therefore is secure of his approbation; and, by consequence, virtuous men of his favour: for goodness in the action is desert in the agent; and desert in the agent is a title that can never possibly be rejected by an all-righteous Governor. There can be no better or stronger reason given, why God should favour one man, and discountenance another, than that the one is virtuous, and the other vicious. Nay, if our ideas may be trusted, it is the only one that can finally have any weight with so perfect a judge. Most certain therefore it is, that God will treat men accordingly? judging them according to their works, and distinguishing the righteous from the wicked in a most signal manner; conformably to moral truth, and the eternal reasons of things. This, I say, will most assuredly be done at some time or other. But it is not done in this life, as we have already observed and acknowledged; and therefore there will certainly be another. Since at present the wicked frequently prosper, and the righteous fall into distress, contrary to the deserts of the one, and the demerits of the other; it plainly follows, that there must and will be a future state, to adjust this irregularity, and rectify the disorders occasioned by it. Without question, God has wise reasons for dispensing good and evil promiscuously in this world; and some of them we know; but without a future state, he could have none at all. Nay, such a proceeding would, in that case, be directly repugnant to all the reason in the

world: Was there to be no life hereafter, every man would undoubtedly be happy or unhappy here, in proportion to his virtues or vices. All the events and dispensations of Providence, would turn upon this hinge, and the blessings of Heaven be distributed by this rule. But since we find it in fact very much otherwise, the doctrine before us seems as clear and certain, as that God *loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity*.

Here perhaps it may be alleged, that the best men, notwithstanding their virtues, have transgressed more or less, and are therefore sinners in the sight of God: that upon this account they have no right to complain of their present hardships and sufferings, supposing these sufferings not to exceed the proportion of their demerits. To this I answer, that however this allegation may serve to stop the mouths, and silence the murmurs, of unhappy men, it no way affects the argument before us; which is drawn from the moral perfection of the Deity, and that rule of righteousness by which he must necessarily be supposed to proceed in all his dispensations. The best men, we are told, have failed and fallen short of their duty, and are therefore justly punishable at any time. Be it so. But have not wicked men failed and offended much more; and therefore deserved much greater punishment? Supposing then no future state, how comes it to pass, that they are not punished; constantly punished, in this world, in proportion to their demerits? If the former be just and fit, do we not plainly see that the latter is much more so? To execute sentence speedily on good men, because they have sometimes erred and done amiss, and at the same time quite overlook the crimes of notorious sinners, is impossible to be reconciled with any idea of moral truth. Whatever reason be assigned for the immediate punishment of those delinquents who are least guilty, must needs hold much stronger in respect of those who are most guilty: and therefore, excluding a life to come, no wicked man would ever have prospered in this. And the reason is, because a righteous and perfect Governor can never act arbitrarily, or capriciously; but will always follow the rule of equity, and the right of the case.

It must indeed be confessed, that in very many cases, we cannot presume to judge of the grounds and reasons of the Divine conduct; but in the present case, they are so plain, and clear, and cogent, that if there be any truth in our faculties, and virtue and vice be real things, there is no room for doubt, or the least suspicion of error. God will assuredly manifest his righteousness in the most public manner, and redress the confusions of this present life.

Should it be further urged, that the sufferings of the righteous are compensated by that serenity of mind, and self-satisfaction which their virtues affords them; and that therefore there is no occasion for a future state to make them amends; the answer is as follows: It is indeed readily granted, that virtue is always amiable, always beneficial, in its own nature; and would be greatly so in favourable conditions and circumstances. But in the case we are speaking of, its principal comforts vanish, and the enjoyment of it dwindles to almost nothing. Supposing a man both virtuous and prosperous, he could not be accounted happy, had he no prospect beyond the grave. Neither outward advantages, nor inward improvements, could avail him much, if he stood so near the brink of destruction, and expected so soon a total dissolution both of soul and body. But this is not the case before us; we are speaking of a good man very unhappy in this world, and deeply distressed; surrounded with griefs and calamities, and perhaps his whole life a continued scene of sorrow and tribulation. Here then the question is, whether, without a future state, his virtue be able to make him ample amends for all his sufferings; to heal the wounds of misfortune, and support him sinking under a load of adversity? Alas! this is so far from being the truth of his case, that he is almost entirely disqualified to receive any enjoyment, or any comfort from his virtue. Extremity of pain and grief will admit of no comfort but what beams from above. And if the windows of Heaven were quite shut, what could a good man, in such a condition, do more, than sit down disconsolate, and abandoned to sorrow and despair? But is not virtue, in itself, fair, and lovely, and

full of charms? True; but he is not at leisure, not in a condition, to attend to them; and if he was, the more lovely he found it, the more it would grieve him to think, that he had no hopes of living to enjoy it; excepting the poor remainder of a short and precarious life. Can then a righteous God leave virtuous men thus destitute, or bring them into the world for such a purpose as this? Impossible. Such a proceeding appears quite inconsistent even with human goodness; much more with divine.

But further: It may deserve to be considered, that part of our species are cut off before they are capable of either contracting guilt, or even knowing the difference between vice and virtue. Among these, doubtless there are some whose portion of evil exceeds their good; whose little lives are almost filled up with pain, and suffering, and lamentation. Now if these hardships are to be made up abundantly in another life, there is no difficulty at all in the case. But, supposing no future state, it seems not only difficult, but utterly impossible, to be accounted for; since, on this supposition, their very existence is a calamity, an injury, a curse. It is not conceivable, that the all-wise and all-perfect Creator should produce any beings in vain; much less, that he should produce them for such an end as is worse than none at all. I will not presume to say, than the communication of good is the sole end of the creation; but one end, one chief end, we plainly perceive it must have been: and therefore we may be assured, that no creatures can be sent into the world with a quite contrary view; neither can any be treated, without any demerit of their own, so hardly and rigorously, as to give just cause for doubting of such a conclusion. If then the foregoing case be really fact, as cannot I think be denied, or disputed, it affords, of itself, an unanswerable proof of a future state: and, if among the adult part of mankind, there are, or have been, any so innocent and good, and yet so unhappy and wretched, that their sufferings have exceeded the proportion of their demerits; the same consequence will follow, and every such instance will yield an irresistible argument for the truth of that doctrine which we

have been considering. For most certain it is, that God can never ordain any man to suffer more than he has deserved, without making him full reparation either here, or hereafter.

Thus when we may safely and justly argue from the present condition and circumstances of mankind; which, without a future state, are plainly repugnant to the Divine attributes; though, with a future state, as plainly and perfectly agreeable thereto: for, admitting such a state, the unequal and irregular distributions of this life are easily solved, and readily accounted for. Nay, they become not only intelligible, but manifestly convenient, suitable, and fit; as directly conducing to prepare mankind for such a state, by a fuller exercise and improvement of every virtue. For a life to come, it may be, and is, highly fitting, that we be trained and tutored here in a state of discipline and probation. Human virtue may require, in order to its perfection and our happiness, that it be thus tried, prepared, and purified: and different minds may require different trials, and various dispensations. On which account we have no reason to wonder, when we find good men in great distress; this being perhaps no more that what is necessary to form an exalted character; to produce more illustrious virtue, and triumphant merit. To *strangers* and *pilgrims*, seeking a better country, and travelling to their appointed home, no difficulties or distresses on the road can seem either unnatural, or intolerable; especially, when they have the pleasure and the encouragement to know that their own final advantage will be thereby promoted. Since then our condition and circumstances here below, are no other than what might be expected, supposing a future state, this may be looked on as a further presumption of the reality of such a state. And thus our present life will be considered, what it really is, a nursery for the next; where we are to be properly educated, and carefully disciplined, for a more durable and blissful state. But, on the other hand, if we exclude futurity, and give up all our hopes and pretensions beyond the grave; this present life becomes, in the eyes of thinking men, all darkness, discomfort,

and perplexity; a sad scene of desperate disorder, and inextricable confusion. This, I have shewn, can never be the case of mankind, while they are under the government of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. Upon the whole, whether we consider the nature and condition of man, or the nature and perfections of his Maker, we find plain indications, and solid proofs, of the important doctrine now before us.

What remains to be considered is, whether or no the future state here treated of will be of perpetual duration. It does not indeed necessarily follow, that because the soul survives the body, therefore it must exist for ever. For doubtless it must always be in the Creator's power to put a period to its existence; and therefore its immortality entirely depends on his good will and pleasure: and if this will has been revealed, as God be thanked it has, it must needs be peculiarly fitting to have recourse to that revelation, as will be observed afterwards. However, at present, let us go on with the evidence of natural reason; which, even as to this point, deserves our attention. Since then God is pleased to prolong the soul's existence after death, and provide for it another state, as appears from a great variety of proofs: it follows from thence, with high degrees of probability, that he will always continue its being, and suffer it to enjoy that immortality which seems to be the privilege of its nature. The force of that argument which we have just examined, concerning the sufferings of the innocent, and the adversities of the righteous, does not indeed extend thus far; because another life of a limited duration may undoubtedly be sufficient to compensate both. Nevertheless, we have, even from reason, good grounds to hope that our next life will be unlimited and endless. I shall content myself at present, with mentioning these two things: First, that as far as our ideas reach, no good reason can be assigned, why God should interpose to prevent the immortality of the soul; nothing of this sort having ever been urged, or produced, with the least appearance or colour of probability. And, secondly, good reasons may be assigned for the contrary supposition.

The ends of the creation, as far as we know them, are confessedly the glory of God, and the good and happiness of his creatures. Now the longer good men are suffered to exist in an happy state, the more they must needs be blessed, and God be glorified: and by the perpetuation of such a state, we plainly perceive that the same great ends will be promoted for ever. But, further: These reasons against annihilation will not only eternally hold good, but be continually gathering new force and strength. The longer virtuous men live, in such a state, the fitter they must be for life; and therefore we may presume, the less will be the danger of extinction. Their faculties must grow, their capacities enlarge, and all their improvements increase, through every part of duration. Great advances must be ever made in knowledge, and virtue, and happiness. They must be continually more and more capable of contemplating, admiring and enjoying the Author of all good, and the Fountain of all perfection. To imagine, after this progress, and these exaltations of their nature, that God should cut the thread of their existence, and put an end to their beings, is to suppose him acting, as far as we can judge, quite contrary to the reasons of things, and the chief ends of the creation: for it seems very evident to our understandings, that much more happiness is producible by a grant of immortality, than by any succession of spirits temporary and mortal: forasmuch as the happiness of the blessed must naturally rise in a very high proportion to the length of their existence. Again: By parity of reason, it might as well be concluded, that God will some time or other annihilate the angels, and destroy the whole host of heaven, as that he should take away the existence of just men made perfect. There will be, both for men and angels, an employment adequate to the eternity we are speaking of. They may search for ever into the divine perfections, and divine workmanship, without being able to exhaust the subjects, or even comprehend them. They may copy after God's excellence, striving to approach and nearer through all that ever remain at an inf

it. In short, nothing

lity, nothing less than an endless duration, can suit that transcendent object, for the study, adoration, and enjoyment, of which they were, both of them, originally created. These considerations, together with the arguments before produced from the frame and constitution of our minds, appear fully sufficient for the conviction of unprejudiced men. Yet, after all, though the doctrines of a future state, and the immortality of the soul, are supported by a great variety of clear and convincing proofs, arising from the mere light of natural reason: yet it is well and happy for us, that those proofs are enforced and confirmed by revelation; that we have assurances from Heaven of our perpetual existence, and that *life and immortality are fully brought to light in the gospel*. This gives a powerful sanction to the dictates of our consciences, and the decisions of our understandings. As the evidences of reason strengthen our faith, so the evidences of faith establish the doctrines of reason; thereby leaving us doubly without excuse, if we reject the truth, or suffer our minds to be drawn into a disbelief of this most important article.

The time will only permit me to point out very briefly what use we ought to make of the foregoing doctrine. Are we then designed for immortality, and fitted with suitable faculties for an endless duration? How grateful a sense ought we to have of the Creator's goodness and bounty! What tributes of praise and thanksgiving are due for such mighty blessings, such inestimable privileges! What returns of pious adoration, and religious reverence, in will, word, and deed! But more especially ought we to take care, as the best and most acceptable expression of our gratitude, that we make a wise and proper use of these blessings, that we walk worthy of the high expectations, and the glorious prospect which he has set before us; that we demean ourselves in such manner as becomes those who are made little lower than the angels, who are destined for immortality; that, by diligent application to wisdom and improvement of our minds as much as possible, we prepare them for eternity and its eternal joys. On our con-

duct here depends all our success hereafter. If, by evil practices, and vicious habits, we lay the foundations of a miserable futurity, our joy will be turned into grief and terror, and the greatest of our blessings into the deepest calamity, and the direst curse. In the next life, vice and virtue will each produce its own natural effects, however external causes may co-operate with them. Every vice, every evil habit, that we carry with us into another world, will, like an evil spirit, haunt us for ever, and persecute us to all eternity. No fiends, no furies, will be able to torment men hereafter like sin and guilt; the rage and remorse of which no words can represent, no thoughts conceive. On the other hand, every grace, every virtue, every good habit, will enlarge our capacities for happiness, and be a further preparation for it. They will not only preserve the soul in perpetual health and ease, but prove inexhaustible sources of joy and gladness. They will likewise make it meet to partake of those unspeakable felicities which God has prepared for the righteous. And how blessed must that immortality be, where every thing within and every thing without, administer delight, and conspire to augment and establish their happiness. Lastly: since there will be another life, and that an eternal one, it must be very absurd to engage our affections deeply in this; or to be immoderately solicitous about any of its vain and transitory enjoyments. To set our hearts on the mean and perishing objects of this world, is, in effect, to forget the privileges of our nature, and the joys and glories of a blessed immortality. What are hours, or days, or years; nay, what is time itself, in comparison of an eternal duration! This life can bear no proportion to the next; and yet we suffer it almost to engross our thoughts, and run away with our affections. We regard this very short span of time, as if it was eternity; and we regard eternity, as if it were nothing. Our reason plainer informs us, that, supposing a future state dubious and uncertain, still we ought to be provided for the most important chance, and become adventurers for another world. But since we have all the evidence and assurance that can be

reason, be expected, or even desired, what words are able to express the folly, frenzy, or those, who slight good, and neglect so great salvation, conclude: if the greatest and most desirable happiness that we are capable of wishing, be allowed to merit our attention and concern, then have we just cause to bend our thoughts this way, and devote our best endeavours to the attainment of it. Our true interest prompts us to withdraw our affections from the fleeting shadows of this life; continually exhorting us to moderate our pursuit of things temporal, that we finally lose not the things which are eternal.

SERMON XXIX.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.

Seriousness in Religion indispensable above all other Dispositions.

1 Peter, iv. 7.

— Be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto Prayer.

THE first requisite in religion is seriousness. No impression can be made without it. An orderly life, so far as others are able to observe us, is now and then produced by prudential motives, or by dint of habit; but without seriousness there can be no religious principle at the bottom, no course of conduct flowing from religious motives; in a word, there can be no religion. This cannot exist without seriousness upon the subject. Perhaps a teacher of religion has more difficulty in producing seriousness amongst his hearers, than in any other part of his office. Until he succeed in this, he loses his labour; and when once, from any cause whatever, a spirit of levity has taken hold of a mind, it is next to impossible to plant serious considerations in that mind. It is seldom to be done except by some great shock or alarm, sufficient to make a radical change in the disposition; and which is God's own way of bringing about the business.

One might have expected that events so awful and tremendous, as death and judgment, that a question so deeply interesting, as whether we shall go to heaven or to hell, could in no possible case,

and in no constitution of mind whatever, fail of exciting the most serious apprehension and concern. But this is not so. In a thoughtless, a careless, a sensual world, many are always found who can resist, and who do resist, the force and importance of all these reflections, that is to say, they suffer nothing of the kind to enter into their thoughts. There are grown men and women, nay, even middle-aged persons, who have not thought seriously about religion an hour, nor a quarter of an hour, in the whole course of their lives. This great object of human solicitude affects not them in any manner whatever.

It cannot be without its use to enquire into the causes of a levity of temper, which so effectually obstructs the admission of every religious influence, and which I should almost call unnatural.

Now there is a numerous class of mankind, who are wrought upon by nothing but what applies immediately to their senses; by what they see, or by what they feel; by pleasures or pains, or by the near prospect of pleasures and pains which they actually experience or actually observe. But it is the characteristic of religion to hold out to our consideration consequences which we do not perceive at the time. That is its very office and proviſce. Therefore if men will restrict and confine all their regards and all their cares to things which they perceive with their outward senses; if they will yield up their understandings to their senses, both in what these senses are fitted to apprehend, and in what they are not fitted to apprehend, it is utterly impossible for religion to settle in their hearts, or for them to entertain any serious concern about the matter. But surely this conduct is completely irrational, and can lead to nothing but ruin. It proceeds upon the supposition, that there is nothing above us, about us, or future, by which we can be affected, but the things which we see with our eyes or feel by our touch. All which is untrue. "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are seen; even his eternal Power and Godhead;" which means, that the order, contrivance, and design, displayed in the creation, prove with certainty, that

there is more in nature than what we really see; and that amongst the invisible things of the universe, there is a Being, the author and origin of all this contrivance and design, and, by consequence, a being of stupendous power, and of wisdom and knowledge, incomparably exalted above any wisdom or knowledge which we see in man; and that he stands in the same relation to us as the maker does to the thing made. The things which are seen are not made of the things which do appear. This is plain: and this argument is independent of Scripture and revelation. What further moral or religious consequences properly follow from it, is another question; but the proposition itself shows, that they who cannot, and they who will not, raise their minds above the mere information of their senses, are in a state of gross error as to the real truth of things, and are also in a state to which the faculties of man ought not to be degraded. A person of this sort may, with respect to religion, remain a child all his life. A child naturally has no concern but about the things which directly meet its senses: and the person we describe is in the same condition.

Again; there is a race of giddy thoughtless men and women, of young men and young women more especially, who look no further than the next day, the next week, the next month; seldom or ever so far as the next year. Present pleasure is every thing with them. The sports of the day, the amusements of the evening, entertainments, and diversions, occupy all their concern; and so long as these can be supplied in succession, so long as they can go from one diversion to another, their minds remain in a state of perfect indifference to every thing except their pleasures. Now what chance has religion with such dispositions as these? Yet these dispositions begun in early life, and favoured by circumstances, that is, by affluence, and health, cleave to a man's character much beyond the period of life in which they might seem to be excusable. Excusable did I say? I ought rather to have said that they are contrary to reason and duty, in every condition and at every period of life. Even in youth they are built upon falsehood and folly. Young persons, as well as old, find that

things do actually ~~come to pass~~. Evils and mischiefs, which they regarded as distant, as out of their view, ~~as beyond~~ the line and reach of their preparation, ~~as~~ their concern, come, they find, to be actually felt. They find that nothing is done by slighting them beforehand; for, however neglected or despised, ~~perhaps~~ ridiculed and derided, they come not only to be things present, but the very things, and the only things, about which their anxiety is employed; become serious things indeed, as being the things which now make them wretched and miserable. Therefore a man must learn to be affected by events which appeared to lie at some distance, before he will be seriously affected by religion.

Again; the general course of education is much against religious seriousness, even without those who conduct education foreseeing or intending any such effect. Many of us are brought up with this world set before us and nothing else. Whatever promotes this world's prosperity is praised; whatever hurts and obstructs and prejudices this world's prosperity is blamed: and there all praise and censure end. We see mankind about us in motion and action, but all these motions and actions, are directed to worldly objects. We hear their conversation, but it is all the same way. And this is what we see and hear from the first. The views which are continually placed before our eyes regard this life alone and its interests. Can it then be wondered at that an early worldly-mindedness is bred in our hearts, so strong as to shut out heavenly-mindedness entirely? In the contest which is always carrying on between this world and the next, it is no difficult thing to see what advantage this world has. One of the greatest of these advantages is, that it pre-occupies the mind: it gets the first hold and the first possession. Childhood and youth, left to themselves, are necessarily guided by sense: and sense is all on the side of this world. Meditation brings us to look towards a future life; but then meditation comes afterwards; it only comes when the mind is already filled and engaged and occupied, may often crowded and surcharged with worldly ideas. It is not only, therefore, ~~fair~~ and right, but it is absolutely necessary

to give to religion the advantage we can give it by dint of education; for all that can be done is too little to set religion upon an equality with its rival: that rival is the world. A creature which is to pass a small portion of its existence in one state, and that state to be preparatory to another, ought, no doubt, to have its attention constantly fixed upon its ulterior and permanent destination. And this would be so, if the question between them came fairly before the mind. We should listen to the Scriptures, we should embrace religion, we should enter into every thing which had relation to the subject, with a concern and impression, even far more than the pursuits of this world, eager and ardent as they are, excite. But the question between religion and the world does not come fairly before us. What surrounds us is this world; what addresses our senses and our passions is this world; what is at hand, what is in contact with us, what acts upon us, what we act upon, is this world. Reason, faith, and hope, are the only principles to which religion applies, or possibly can apply: and it is reason, faith, and hope, striving with sense, striving with temptation, striving for things absent against things which are present. That religion, therefore, may not be quite excluded and overborne, may not quite sink under these powerful causes, every support ought to be given to it, which can be given by education, by instruction, and, above all, by the example of those, to whom young persons look up, acting with a view to a future life themselves.

Again; it is the nature of worldly business of all kinds, especially of much hurry or over-employment, or over-anxiety in business, to shut out and keep out religion from the mind. The question is, whether the state of mind which this cause produces, ought to be called a want of seriousness in religion. It becomes coldness and indifference towards religion; but is it properly a want of seriousness upon the subject? I think it is; and in this way. We are never serious upon any matter which we regard as trifling. This is impossible. And we are led to regard a thing as trifling, which engages no portion of our habitual

thoughts, in comparison with what other things do.

But further: the world, even in its innocent pursuits and pleasures, has a tendency unfavourable to the religious sentiment. But were these all it had to contend with, the strong application which religion makes to the thoughts whenever we think of it at all, the strong interest which it presents to us, might enable it to overcome and prevail in the contest. But there is another adversary to oppose much more formidable; and that is sensuality; an addiction to sensual pleasures. It is the flesh which lusteth against the spirit; that is the war which is waged within us. So it is, no matter what may be the cause, that sensual indulgences, over and above their proper criminality, as sins, as offences against God's commands, have a specific effect upon the heart of man in destroying the religious principle within him; or still more surely in preventing the formation of that principle. It either induces an open profaneness of conversation and behaviour, which scorns and contemns religion; a kind of profligacy, which rejects and sets at nought the whole thing; or it brings upon the heart an averseness to the subject, a fixed dislike and reluctance to enter upon its concerns in any way whatever. That a resolved sinner should set himself against a religion which tolerates no sin, is not to be wondered at. He is against religion, because religion is against the course of life upon which he has entered, and which he does not feel himself willing to give up. But this it not the whole, nor is it the bottom of the matter. The effect we allude to is not so reasoning or argumentative as this. It is a specific effect upon the mind. The heart is rendered unsusceptible of religious impressions, incapable of a serious regard to religion. And this effect belongs to sins of sensuality more than to other sins. It is a consequence which almost universally follows from them.

We measure the importance of things, not by what, or according to what they are in truth, but by and according to the space and room which they occupy in our minds. Now our business, our trade, our schemes, our pursuits, our

gains, our losses, our fortunes, possessing so much of our minds, whether we regard the hours we expend in meditating upon them, or the earnestness with which we think about them; and religion possessing so little share of our thought either in time or earnestness; the consequence is, that worldly interest comes to be the serious thing with us, religion comparatively the trifle. Men of business are naturally serious; but all their seriousness is absorbed by their business. In religion they are no more serious than the most giddy characters are; than those characters are which betray a levity in all things.

Again; the want of due seriousness in religion is almost sure to be the consequence of the absence or disuse of religious ordinances and exercises. I use two terms; *absence* and *disuse*. Some have never attended upon any religious ordinance, or practised any religious exercises, since the time they were born; some a very few times in their lives. With these it is the *absence* of religious ordinances and exercises. There are others (and many we fear of this description), who, whilst under the guidance of their parents, have frequented religious ordinances, and been trained up to religious exercises, but who, when they came into more public life, and to be their own masters, and to mix in the pleasures of the world, or engage themselves in its business and pursuits, have forsaken these duties in whole or in a great degree. With these it is the *disuse* of religious ordinances and exercises. But I must also explain what I mean by *religious ordinances* and *exercises*. By *religious ordinances* I mean the being instructed in our catechism in our youth; attending upon public worship at church; the keeping holy the Lord's day regularly and most particularly, together with a few other days in the year, by which some very principal events and passages of the Christian history are commemorated; and at its proper season the more solemn office of receiving the Lord's supper. These are so many rites and ordinances of Christianity; concerning all which it may be said, that with the greatest part of mankind, especially of that class of mankind which must, or does,

give much of its time and care to worldly concerns, they are little less than absolutely necessary; if we judge it to be necessary to maintain and uphold any sentiment, any impression, any seriousness, about religion in the mind at all. They are necessary to preserve in the thoughts a place for the subject; they are necessary that the train of our thoughts may not even be closed up against it. Were all days of the week alike, and employed alike; was there no difference or distinction between Sunday and work day; was there not a church in the nation; were we never from one year's end to another called together to participate in public worship; were there no set forms of public worship; no particular persons appointed to minister and officiate, indeed no assemblies for public worship at all; no joint prayers, no preaching; still religion, in itself, in its reality and importance, in its end and event, would be the same thing as what it is; we should still have to account for our conduct; there would still be heaven and hell; salvation and perdition; there would still be the laws of God, both natural and revealed; all the obligation which the authority of Creator can impose upon a creature; all the gratitude which is due from a rational being to the Author and giver of every blessing which he enjoys; lastly, there would still be the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. All these things would, with or without religious ordinances, be equally real, and existing, and valid; but men would not think equally about them. Many would entirely and totally neglect them. Some there would always be of a more devout, or serious, or contemplative disposition, who would retain a lively sense of these things under all circumstances and all disadvantages, who would never lose their veneration for them, never forget them. But from others, from the careless, the busy, the followers of pleasure, the pursuers of wealth or advancement, these things would slip away from the thoughts entirely.

Together with *religious ordinances* we mentioned *religious exercises*. By the term *religious exercises*, I in particular mean private prayer; whether it be at set times, as in the morning and evening

of each day; or whether it be called forth by occasions, as when we are to form some momentous decision, or enter upon some great undertaking: or when we are under some pressing difficulty, or deep distress, some excruciating bodily pain, or heavy affliction; or, on the other hand, and no less properly, when we have lately been receiving some signal benefit, experiencing some signal mercy; such as preservation from danger, relief from difficulty or distress, abatement of pain, recovery from sickness: for by prayer, let it be observed, we mean devotion in general; and thanksgiving is devotion as much as prayer itself. * I mean private prayer, as here described; and I also mean, what is perhaps the most natural form of private prayer, short ejaculatory extemporaneous addresses to God, as often as either the reflections which rise up in our minds, let them come from what quarter they may, or the objects and incidents which seize our attention, prompt us to utter them; which, in a religiously disposed mind will be the case, I may say, every hour, and which ejaculation may be offered up to God in any posture, in any place, or in any situation. Amongst religious exercises I also reckon family prayer, which unites many of the uses both of public worship and private prayer. The reading of religious books is likewise to be accounted a religious exercise. Religious meditation still more so: and more so for this reason, that it implies and includes that most important duty, self-examination; for I hold it to be next to impossible for a man to meditate upon religion, without meditating at the same time upon his own present condition with respect to the tremendous alternative which is to take place upon him after his death. *

These are what we understand by religious exercises; and they are all so far of the same nature with religious ordinances that they are aids and helps of religion itself; and I think that religious seriousness cannot be maintained in the soul without them.

But again; a cause which has a strong tendency to destroy religious seriousness, and which almost infallibly prevents its formation and growth in young minds, is levity in conversation upon religious sub-

jects, or upon subjects connected with religion. Whether we regard the practice with respect to those who use it, or to those who hear it, it is highly to be blamed, and is productive of great mischief. In those who use it, it amounts almost to a proof that they are destitute of religious seriousness. The principle itself is destroyed in them, or was never formed in them. Upon those who hear, its effect is this. If they have concern about religion, and the disposition towards religion which they ought to have, and which we signify by this word *seriousness*, they will be inwardly shocked and offended by the levity with which they hear it treated. They will, as it were, resent such treatment of a subject, which by them has always been thought upon with awe and dread and veneration. But the pain with which they were at first affected goes off by hearing frequently the same sort of language; and then they will be almost sure, if they examine the state of their minds as to religion, to feel a change in themselves for the worse. This is the danger to which those are exposed, who had before imbibed serious impressions. Those who had not, will be prevented, by such sort of conversation, from ever imbibing them at all; so that its influence is in all cases pernicious.

The turn which this levity usually takes, is in jests and raillery upon the opinions, or the peculiarities, or the persons of men of particular sects, or who bear particular names; especially if they happen to be more serious than ourselves. And of late this loose, and I can hardly help calling it profane humour, has been directed chiefly against the followers of methodism. But against whomsoever it happens to be pointed, it has all the bad effects both upon the speaker and the hearer which we have noticed: and as in other instances, so in this, give me leave to say that it is very much misplaced. In the first place, were the doctrines and sentiments of those who bear this name ever so foolish and extravagant (I do not say that they are either) this proposition I shall always maintain to be true, viz. that the wildest opinion that ever was entertained in matters of religion, is more rational than unconcern about these mat-

ters. Upon this subject nothing is so absurd as indifference; no folly so contemptible as thoughtlessness and levity. In the next place, do methodists deserve this treatment? Be their particular doctrines what they may, the professors of these doctrines appear to be in earnest about them; and a man who is in earnest in religion cannot be a bad man, still less a fit subject for derision. I am no methodist myself. In their leading doctrines I differ from them. But I contend, that sincere men are not, for these, or indeed, any doctrines, to be made laughing stocks to others. I do not bring in the case of methodists in this part of my discourse, for the purpose of vindicating their tenets, but for the purpose of observing, (and I wish that the observation may weigh with all my readers) that the custom of treating their characters and persons, their preaching or their preachers, their meetings or worship, with scorn, has the pernicious consequence of destroying our own seriousness, together with the seriousness of those who hear or join in such sort of conversation; especially if they be young persons: and I am persuaded that much mischief is actually done in this very way.

A phrase much used upon these occasions, and frequent in the mouth of those who speak of such as in religious matters are more serious than themselves, is, "that they are righteous over-much." These, it is true, are scripture words; and it is that circumstance which has given currency to the expression; but in the way and sense in which they are used, I am convinced that they are exceedingly misapplied. The text occurs once in the Bible, and only once. It is in the book of Ecclesiastes, 7th chap. and 16th verse. It is not very easy to determine what is meant by it in the place in which it is found. It is a very obscure passage. It seems to me most probable, that it relates to an external affectation of righteousness, not prompted by internal principle; or rather to the assuming the character of righteousness, merely to vaunt or shew our superiority over others: to conceitedness in religion: in like manner as the caution delivered in the same verse, "be not over-wise," respects the ostentation of wisdom, and not the attainment itself. So

long as we mean by righteousness, a sincere and anxious desire to seek out the will of God, and to perform it, it is impossible to be righteous over-much. There is no such thing in nature: nor was it, nor could it be, the intention of any passage in the Bible, to say that there is, or to authorize us in casting over-righteousness as a reproach or a censure upon any one.

In like manner it has been objected, that so much regard, or, as the objectors would call it, over-regard for religion, is inconsistent with the interest and welfare

and wit
prosperity in our worldly affairs. I believe that there is very little ground for this objection in fact, and even as the world goes; in reason and principle there is none. A good Christian divides his time between the duties of religion, the calls of business, and those quiet relaxations which may be innocently allowed to his circumstances and condition, and which will be chiefly in his family or amongst a few friends. In this plan of life there is no confusion or interference of its parts; and unless a man be given to sloth and laziness, which are what religion condemns, he will find time enough for them all. This calm system may not be sufficient for that unceasing eagerness, hurry, and anxiety about worldly affairs, in which some men pass their lives; but it is sufficient for every thing which reasonable prudence requires: and it is perfectly consistent with usefulness in our stations, which is a main point. Indeed, compare the hours which serious persons spend in religious exercises and meditations, with the hours which the thoughtless and irreligious spend in idleness and vice and expensive diversions, and you will perceive on which side of the comparison the advantage lies, even in this view of the subject.

Nor is there any thing in the nature of religion to support the objection. In a certain sense it is true, what has been sometimes said, that religion ought to be the rule of life, not the business; by which is meant, that the subject matter even of religious duties lies in the common affairs and transactions of the world. Diligence in our calling is an end in itself of this; which, however, keeps both a

man's head and hands at work upon business merely temporal; yet religion may be governing him here meanwhile. God may be feared in the busiest scenes.

In addition to the above, there exists another prejudice against religious seriousness, arising from a notion very commonly entertained, viz. that religion leads to gloom and melancholy. This notion, I am convinced, is a mistake. Some persons are constitutionally subject to melancholy, which is as much a disease in them, as the ague is a disease; and it may happen that such men's melancholy shall fall upon religious ideas, as it may upon any other subject which seizes their distempered imagination. But this is not religion leading to melancholy. Or it sometimes is the case, that men are brought to a sense of religion by calamity and affliction, which produce at the same time depression of spirits. But neither here is religion the cause of this distress or dejection, or to be blamed for it. These cases being excepted, the very reverse of what is alleged against religion is the truth. No man's spirits were ever hurt by doing his duty. On the contrary, one good action, one temptation resisted and overcome, one sacrifice of desire or interest purely for conscience sake, will prove a cordial for weak and low spirits beyond what either indulgence or diversion or company can do for them. And a succession and course of such actions and self-denials, springing from a religious principle and manfully maintained, is the best possible course that can be followed as a remedy for sinkings and oppressions of this kind. Can it then be true, that religion leads to melancholy? Occasions arise to every man living; to many very severe as well as repeated occasions, in which the hopes of religion are the only stay, that is left him. Godly men have that within them which cheers and comforts them in their saddest hours: ungodly men have that which strikes their heart, like a dagger, in its gayest moments. Godly men discover, what is very true, but what by most men, is found out too late, namely, that a good conscience, and the hope of our Creator's final favour and acceptance, are the only solid happiness to be attained in this

world. Experience corresponds with the reason of the thing. I take upon me to say, that religious men are generally cheerful. If this be not observed, as might be expected supposing it to be true, it is because the cheerfulness which religion inspires does not shew itself in noise or in fits and starts of merriment, but is calm and constant. Of this the only true and valuable kind of cheerfulness, for all other kinds are hollow and unsatisfying, religious men possess not less but a greater share than others.

Another destroyer of religious seriousness, and which is the last I shall mention, is a certain fatal turn which some minds take, namely, that when they find difficulties in or concerning religion, or any of the tenets of religion, they forthwith plunge into irreligion; and make these difficulties, or any degree of uncertainty which seems to their apprehension to hang over the subject, a ground and occasion for giving full liberty to their inclinations, and for casting off the restraints of religion entirely. This is the case with men, who, at the best, perhaps, were only balancing between the sanctions of religion and the love of pleasure or of unjust gain, but especially the former. In this precarious state, any objection, or appearance of objection, which diminishes the force of the religious impression, determines the balance against the side of virtue, and gives up the doubter to sensuality, to the world, and to the flesh. Now, of all ways which a man can take, this is the surest way to destruction; and it is completely irrational. I say it is completely irrational; for when we meditate upon the tremendous consequences which form the subject of religion, we cannot avoid this reflection, that any degree of probability whatever, I had almost said any degree of possibility whatever, of religion being true, ought to determine a rational creature so to act as to secure himself from punishment in a future state, and the loss of that happiness which may be attained. Therefore he has no pretence for alleging uncertainty as an excuse for his conduct, because he does not act in conformity with that in which there is no uncertainty at all. In the next place, it is giving to apparent diffi-

culties more weight than they are entitled to. I only request any man to consider, first, the necessary allowances to be made for the short-sightedness and the weakness of the human understanding; secondly, the nature of those subjects concerning which religion treats, so remote from our senses, so different from our experience, so above and beyond the ordinary train and course of our ideas; and then say whether difficulties, and great difficulties also, were not to be expected; nay further, whether they be not in some measure subservient to the very purpose of religion. The reward of everlasting life, and the punishment of misery of which we know no end, if they were present and immediate, could not be withstood, and would not leave any room for liberty or choice. But this sort of force upon the will is not what God designed; nor is suitable indeed to the nature of free, moral, and accountable agents. The truth is, and it was most likely beforehand that it would be so, that amidst some points which are dark, some which are dubious, there are many which are clear and certain. Now, I apprehend, that, if we act faithfully up to those points concerning which there is no question, most especially if we determine upon and choose our rule and course of life according to those principles of choice which all men whatever allow to be wise and safe principles, and the only principles which are so; and conduct ourselves steadfastly according to the rule thus chosen; the difficulties which remain in religion will not move or disturb us much; and will, as we proceed, become gradually less and fewer. Whereas, if we begin with objections; if all we consider about religion be its difficulties; but, most especially, if we permit the suggestion of difficulties to drive us into a practical rejection of religion itself, and to afford us, which is what we wanted, an excuse to ourselves for casting off its restraints; then the event will be, that its difficulties will multiply upon us; its light grow more and more dim, and we shall settle in the worst and most hopeless of all conditions; the last condition, I will venture to say, in which any man living would wish his son, or any one whom he loved, and for

whose happiness he was anxious, to be placed; a life of confirmed vice and dissoluteness; founded in a formal renunciation of religion.

He that has to preach Christianity to persons in this state, has to preach to stones. He must not expect to be heard, either with complacency or seriousness, or patience, or even to escape contempt and derision. Habits of thinking are fixed by habits of acting; and both too solidly fixed to be moved by human persuasion. God in his mercy, and by his providences, as well as by his spirit, can touch and soften the heart of stone. And it is seldom perhaps, that, without some strong, and, it may be, sudden impressions of this kind, and from this source, serious sentiments ever penetrate dispositions hardened in the manner which we have here described,

SERMON XXX.

By WILLIAM PALEY, D. D.

On purity of the Heart and Affections.

1 JOHN, iii. 2, 3.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

WHEN the text tells us, "that every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself," it must be understood, as intending to describe the natural, proper, and genuine effects of this hope, rather, perhaps, than the actual effects, or at least the effects, which, in point of experience, universally follow from it. As hath already been observed, the whole text relates to sincere Christians, and to these alone: the word *we*, in the preceding part of it, comprises sincere Christians and no others. Therefore the word *every man* must be limited to the same sort of men, of whom he was speaking before. It is not probable, that in the same sentence he would change the persons and charac-

ters concerning whom he discoursed. So that if it had been objected to Saint John, that, in point of fact, every man did not purify himself who had this hope in him, he would have replied, I believe, that these were not the kind of persons he had in his view; that throughout the whole of the text, he had in contemplation the religious condition and character of sincere Christians, and no other. When, in the former part of the text, he talked of ~~us~~ being the sons of God, of ~~us~~ being like Christ, he undoubtedly meant sincere Christians alone: and it would be strange if he meant any other in this latter part of the text, which is in fact a continuation of the same discourse, of the same subject, nay, a portion of the same sentence.

I have said thus much in order to obviate the contrariety which their seems to be betwixt Saint John's assertion and experience. Experience, I acknowledge, proves the inefficacy, in numerous cases, of religious hope and religious motives: and it must be so: for if religious motives operated certainly and necessarily, if they produced their effect by an infallible power over the mind, we should only be machines necessarily actuated; and that certainly is not the thing which a moral agent, a religious agent, was intended to be. It was intended that we should have the power of doing right, and consequently, of doing wrong: for he who cannot do wrong, cannot do right by choice; he is a mere tool and instrument, or rather a machine, whichever he does. Therefore all moral motives, and all religious motives, unless they went to deprive man of his liberty entirely, which they most certainly were not meant to do, must depend for their influence and success upon the himself.

his success, therefore, is various; but when it fails, it is owing to some vice and corruption in the mind itself. Some men are very little affected by religious exhortation of any kind, either by hearing or reading. That is a vice and corruption in the mind itself. Some men, though affected, are not affected sufficiently to influence their lives. That is a vice and corruption in the mind, or rather in the heart; and so it will always be found. But I do not so much wonder at persons

being unaffected by what others tell them, be those others who they may, preachers, or teachers, or friends, or parents, as I wonder at seeing men not affected by their own thoughts, their own meditations; yet it is so; and when it is so, it argues a deep corruption of mind indeed. We can think upon the most serious, the most solemn subjects, without any sort of consequence upon our lives. Shall we call this seared insensibility? shall we call it a fatal inefficiency of the rational principle within us? shall we confess, that the mind has lost its government over the man?

These are observations upon the state of morals and religion, as we see them in the world: but whatever these observations be, it is still true, and this is Saint John's assertion, that the proper, natural, and genuine effect of religious hope is to cause us to strive "to purify ourselves, even as he is pure." Saint John strongly fixes our attention, I mean, as he means, such of us as are sincere Christians, upon what we are to be hereafter. This, as to particulars, is veiled from us, as we have observed, by our present nature, but as to generals, as to what is of real importance and concern for us to know (I do not mean but that it might be highly gratifying and satisfactory to know more, but as to what is of the first importance and concern for us to know) we have a glorious assurance; we have an assurance that we shall undergo a change in our nature infinitely for the better; that when he shall appear glorified as he is, we shall be like him. Then the point is, what we are to do, how we are to act, under this expectation, having this hope, with this prospect, placed before our eyes. Saint John tells us, "we are to purify ourselves, even as he is pure."

Now what is the scriptural meaning of purifying ourselves can be made out thus. The contrary of purity is defilement, that is evident; but our Saviour himself hath told us what the things which defile a man are; and this is the enumeration: evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; and the reason given why these are the

real proper defilements of our nature, is that they proceed from within, out of the heart : these evil things come from within, and defile the man. The seat, therefore, of moral defilement, according to our Saviour, is the heart ; by which we know, that he always meant the affections and the disposition. The seat, therefore, of moral purity must necessarily be the same ; for purity is the reverse of defilement : consequently, to purify ourselves, is to cleanse our hearts from the presence and pollution of sin ; of those sins, particularly, which reside in, and continue in, the heart. This is the purgation intended in our text. This is the task of purgation enjoined upon us.

It is to be noticed, that it goes beyond the mere control of our actions. It adds a further duty, the purifying of our thoughts and affections. Nothing can be more certain, than that it was the design of our Saviour, in the passage here referred to, to direct the attention of his disciples to the heart, to that which is within a man, in contradistinction to that which is external. Now he who only strives to control his outward actions, but lets his thoughts and passions indulge themselves without check or restraint, does not attend to that which is within him, in contradistinction to that which is external. Secondly, the instances which our Saviour has given, though, like all instances in Scripture, and to say the truth, in all ancient writings, they be specimens and illustrations of his meaning, as to the kind and nature of the duties or the vices which he had in view, rather than complete catalogues, including all such duties or vices by name, so that no other but what are thus named and specified were intended ; though this qualified way of understanding the enumeration is right, yet even this enumeration itself shows, that our Saviour's lesson went beyond the mere external action. Not only are adulteries and fornications mentioned, but evil thoughts and lasciviousness ; not only murders, but an evil eye ; not only thefts, but covetousness or covetings. Thus by laying the axe to the root ; not by lopping off the branches, but by laying the axe to the root, our Saviour fixed the only rule which can ever produce good morals.

Merely controlling the actions, without governing the thoughts and affections, will not do. In point of fact it is never successful. It is certainly not a compliance with our Saviour's command, nor is it what Saint John meant in the text by purifying ourselves.

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he," namely, Christ himself, "is pure." It is a doctrine and lesson of the New Testament, not once, but repeatedly inculcated, that if we hope to resemble Christ in his glorified state, we must resemble him in his human state. And it is a part, and most significant part of this doctrine, that the resemblance must consist in purity from sin, especially from those sins which cleave and attach to the heart. It is by Saint Paul usually put thus : "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." "Dead with Christ ;" what can that mean ? for the apostle speaks to those who had not yet undergone natural death. He explains : "Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin ;" that, you hear, is the death he means. "He, that is dead, is freed from sin ;" that is Saint Paul's own exposition of his own words ; and then, keeping the sense of the words in his thoughts, he adds ; "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Again, still keeping the same sense in view, and no other sense : "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Once more, but still observe in the same sense, "We are buried with him by baptism into water ; our old man is crucified with him ; the burden of the whole passage is, that if we hope to resemble what Christ is in heaven, we must resemble what he is upon earth : and that this resemblance must consist specifically in the radical casting off of our sins. The expressions of the apostle are very strong ; that the body of sin may be destroyed. Let not sin reign in your mortal body ; obey it not in the lusts thereof ;" not only in its practices, but in its desires. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

In another epistle, that to the Colossians, Saint Paul speaks of an emancipation from sin, as a virtual rising with him

dead, like as Christ rose from the dead. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." In this way is the comparison carried on. And what is the practical exhortation which it suggests? "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence, and covetousness?" which is an equivalent exhortation, and drawn from the same premises as that of the text; "Purify yourselves, even as he is pure."

The Scriptures, then teach that we are to make ourselves like Christ upon earth, that we may become like him in heaven, and this likeness is to consist in purity.

Now there are a class of Christians, and I am ready to allow, real Christians, to whom this admonition of the text is peculiarly necessary.

They are not those who set aside religion; they are not those who disregard the will of their Maker, but they are those who endeavour to obey him partially, and in this way; finding it an easier thing to do good than to expel their sins, especially those which cleave to their hearts, their affections, or their imaginations, they set their endeavours more towards beneficence than purity. You say we ought not to speak disparagingly of doing good by no means; but we affirm, that it is not the whole of our duty, nor the most difficult part of it; in particular, it is not that part of it which is insisted upon in the text, and in those other Scriptures that have been mentioned. The text, enjoining the imitation of Christ, upon earth, in order that we may become like him in heaven, does not say, do good even as he went about doing good, but it says, "purify yourselves even as he is pure:" saith Saint John, "Mortify the deeds of the body, let not sin reign in you; die with Christ unto sin; be baptised unto Jesus Christ, that is, unto his death; be buried with him by baptism unto death; be planted together in the likeness of his death; crucify the old man, and

destroy the body of sin; no death hath no more dominion over him, so let sin no more reign in your mortal bodies:" so Saint Paul. All these strong and significant metaphors are for the purpose of impressing more forcibly upon us this great lesson: that to participate with Christ in his glory, we must participate with him in his humiliation; and that this participation consists in divesting ourselves of those sins, of the heart especially, and affections, whether they break out into action or not, which are inconsistent with that purity, of which he left us an example, and to the attainment and preservation of which purity, we are most solemnly enjoined to direct our first, strongest, and our most sincere endeavours.

SERMON XXXI.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.

How virtue produces Belief, and vice Unbelief.

John, vii. 17.

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.

It does not, I think, at first sight appear, why our behaviour should influence our belief, or how any particular course of action, good or bad, should affect our assent to any particular propositions which are offered to us: for truth or probability can never depend upon our conduct: the credibility or incredibility of religion is the same, whether we act well or ill, whether we obey its laws or disobey them. Nor is it very manifest, how even our perception of evidence or credibility should be affected by our virtues or vices: because conduct is immediately voluntary, belief is not: one is an act of the will under the power of motives; the other is an act of the understanding, upon which motives do not, primarily at least, operate, nor ought to operate at all. Yet our Lord, in the text, affirms this to be the case, namely, that our behaviour does influence our belief, and to have been the case from the beginning, that is, even during his own ministry upon earth. "If any man will do His will, he shall know

of the doctrine, whether it be of God." It becomes, therefore, a subject of serious and religious inquiry, how, why, and to what extent, the declaration of the text may be maintained.

Now the first and most striking observation is, that it corresponds with experience. The fact, so far as it can be observed, is as the text represents it to be. I speak of the general course of human conduct, which is the thing to be considered. Good men are generally believers: bad men are generally unbelievers. This is the general state of the case: not without exceptions; for, on the one hand, there may be men of regular external morals, who are yet unbelievers, because though immorality be one cause of unbelief, it is not the only cause: and, on the other hand, there are undoubtedly many, who, although they believe and tremble, yet go on in their sins, because their faith doth not regulate their practice. But, having respect to the ordinary course and state of human conduct, what our Saviour hath declared is verified by experience. He that doeth the will of God, cometh to believe, that Jesus Christ is of God, namely, a messenger from God. A process, some how or other, takes place in the understanding, which brings the mind of him who acts rightly to this conclusion. A conviction is formed, and every day made stronger and stronger. No man ever comprehended the value of Christian precepts, but by conducting his life according to them. When, by so doing, he is brought to know their excellency, their perfection, I had almost said, their divinity, he is necessarily also brought to think well of the religion itself. Hear St. Paul:—"The night is far spent: the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light; let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof:" Rom. xiii. 11. It is recorded of this text, that it was the means of the conversion of a very eminent father of the church, St. Austin; for which reason I quote it as an instance

to my present purpose, since I apprehend it must have wrought with him in the manner here represented. I have no doubt but that others have been affected in like manner by this or other particular portions of Scripture; and that still greater numbers have been drawn to Christianity by the general impression which our Lord's discourses, and the speeches and letters of his apostles, have left upon their minds. This is sometimes called the internal evidence of our religion; and it is very strong. But inasmuch as it is a species of evidence which applies itself to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, it will operate most powerfully where it finds these qualities, or even these tendencies and dispositions subsisting. If this be the effect of virtuous conduct, and in some proportion, the effect also of each separate act of virtue, the contrary effect must necessarily follow from a contrary course of behaviour. And perhaps it may assist us in unfolding the subject, to take up the inquiry in this order; because if it can be shown why, and in what manner, vice tends to obstruct, impair, and, at length, destroy our faith, it will not be difficult to allow, that virtue must facilitate, support, and confirm it: that, at least, it will deliver us, or keep us free, from that weight of prejudice and resistance which is produced in the mind by vice, and which acts against the reception of religious truth.

Now the case appears to me to be no other than this: A great many persons, before they proceed upon an act of known transgression, do expressly state to themselves the question, whether religion be true or not; and in order to get at the object of their desire (for the real matter to be determined is, whether they shall have their desire gratified or not,) in order, I say, to get at the pleasure in some cases, or in other cases, the point of interest, upon which they have set their hearts, they choose to decide, and they do in fact decide with themselves, that these things are not so certain, as to be a reason for them to give up the pleasure which lies before them, or the advantage, which is now, and which may never be again, in their power to compass. This conclusion does actually take place, and,

at various times, must almost necessarily take place, in the minds of men of bad morals. And now remark the effect, which it has upon their thoughts afterwards. When they come at another future time to reflect upon religion, they reflect upon it as upon what they had before adjudged to be unfounded, and too uncertain to be acted upon, or to be depended upon; and reflections, accompanied with this adverse and unfavourable impression, naturally lead to infidelity. Herein, therefore, is seen the fallacious operation of sin: first, in the circumstances under which men form their opinion and their conclusions concerning religion; and, secondly, in the effect, which conclusions, which doubts so formed, have upon their judgment afterwards. First, what is the situation of mind in which they decide concerning religion? and what can be expected from such a situation? Some magnified and alluring pleasure has stirred their desires and passions. It cannot be enjoyed without sin. Here is religion, denouncing and forbidding it on one side: there is opportunity, drawing and pulling on the other. With this drag and bias upon their thoughts, they pronounce and decide concerning the most important of all subjects, and of all questions. If they should determine for the truth and reality of religion, they must sit down disappointed of a gratification, upon which they had set their hearts, and of using an opportunity, which may never come again. Nevertheless they must determine one way or other. And this process, viz. a similar deliberation and a similar conclusion, is renewed and repeated, as often as occasions of sin offer. The effect, at length, is a settled persuasion against religion. For what is it, in persons who proceed in this manner, which rests and dwells upon their memories? What is it which gives to their judgment its turn and bias? It is these occasional decisions often repeated: which decisions have the same power and influence over the man's after-opinion, as if they had been made ever so impartially, or ever so correctly; whereas, in fact, they are made under circumstances which exclude, almost, the possibility of their being made with fairness, and with sufficient inquiry. Men decide

under the power and influence of sinful temptation: but, having decided, the decision is afterwards remembered by them, and grows into a settled and habitual opinion, as much as if they had proceeded in it without any bias or prejudice whatever.

The extent to which this cause acts, that is, the numbers who are included in its influence, will be further known by the following observation. I have said, that sinners oftentimes expressly state to themselves the question, whether religion be true or not; and that they state to themselves this question, at the time when they are about to enter upon some act of sin, which religion condemns: and I believe the case so to be. I believe that this statement is often expressly made, and in the manner which I have represented. But there is also a tacit rejection of religion, which has nearly the same effect. Whenever a man deliberately ventures upon an action which he knows that religion prohibits, he tacitly rejects religion. There may not pass in his thoughts every step which we have described, nor may he come expressly to the conclusion: but he acts upon the conclusion; he practically adopts it. And the doing so will alienate his mind from religion, as surely, almost, as if he had formerly argued himself into an opinion of its untruth. The effect of sin is necessarily, and highly, and in all cases, adverse to the production and existence of religious faith. Real difficulties are doubled and trebled, when they fall in with vicious propensities; imaginary difficulties are readily started. Vice is wonderfully acute in discovering reasons on its own side. This may be said of all kinds of vice; but, I think, it more particularly holds good of what are called licentious vices, that is, of vices of debauchery; for sins of debauchery have a tendency, which other species of sin have not so directly, to unsettle and weaken the powers of the understanding, as well as, in a greater degree, I think, than other vices, to render the heart thoroughly corrupt. In a mind so wholly depraved, the impression of any argument, relating to a moral or religious subject, is faint, and slight, and transitory. To a vitiated palate no meat has

its right taste ; with a debauched mind no reasoning has its proper influence.

But secondly : have we not also, from Scripture, reason to believe, that God's holy Spirit will be assisting to those who earnestly pray for it, and who sincerely prepare themselves for its reception ; and that it will be assisting to them in this matter of faith in religion. The language of Scripture is, that God gives his holy Spirit to them that ask it ; and moreover, that to them who use and improve it, as they ought, it is given in more and more abundance. "He that hath, to him shall be given more. He that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Matt. xiii. 12. He who is studious to improve his measure of grace, shall find that measure increased upon him. He who neglects or stifles, neglects through irreligion, carelessness, and heedlessness, buries in sensuality, or stifles by the opposition of sin, the portion of grace and assistance which is vouchsafed to him, he, the Scripture says, will find that portion withdrawn from him. Now, this being the general nature and economy of God's assisting grace, there is no reason why it should not extend to our faith, as well as to our practice ; our perceiving the truth, as well as our obeying the truth, may be helped and succoured by it. God's Spirit can have access to our understandings, as well as our affections. He can render the mind sensible to the impressions of evidence, and the power of truth. If creatures, like us, might take upon themselves to judge what is a proper object of divine help, it should seem to be a serious, devout, humble, and apprehensive mind, anxiously desiring to learn and know the truth : and, in order to know it, keeping the heart and understanding pure and prepared for that purpose ; that is to say, carefully abstaining from the indulgence of passions, and from practices which harden and indispose the mind against religion. I say, a mind, so guarding and qualifying itself, and imploring, with devout earnestness and solicitude, the aid of God's holy Spirit in its meditations and inquiries, seems, so far as we can presume to judge, as meet an object of divine help and favour as any of which we can form an idea : and it is not for

us, to narrow the promises of God concerning his assisting grace, so as, without authority, to exclude such an object from it.

From the doctrine, which has been thus concisely proposed, various important rules and reflections arise.

First ; let not men, involved in sinful courses, wonder at the difficulties which they meet with in religion. It is an effect of sin, which is almost sure to follow. Sin never fails, both to magnify real difficulties and to suggest imaginary ones. It rests and dwells upon objections, because they help the sinner, in some measure, to excuse his conduct to himself. They cause him to come to a conclusion, which permits the gratification of his passions, or the compassing of his purpose. Deep and various is the deceitfulness of sin, of licentious sins most particularly ; for they cloud the understanding ; they disqualify men for serious meditation of any kind ; above all, for the meditation of religion.

Secondly ; let them, who ask for more light, first take care to act up to the light which they have. Scripture and experience join their testimony to this point, namely, that they, who faithfully practise what they do know, and live agreeably to the belief which they have, and to the just and rational consequences of that belief, seldom fail to proceed further, and to acquire more and more confidence in the truth of religion ; whereas if they live in opposition to the degree of belief which they have, be it what it may, even it will gradually grow weaker and weaker, and, at length, die away in the soul.

Thirdly ; let them, who are anxious to arrive at just sentiments of religion, keep their minds in a capable state ; that is, free from the bias of former decisions made, or of former doubts conceived, at a time, when the power and influence of sinful temptation was upon them ; suggested, in fact, lest they should find themselves obliged to give up some gratification upon which they had set their hearts ; and which decisions, nevertheless, and doubts have the same operation upon their judgments, as if they had been the result of the most pure and impartial reasoning. It is not peculiar to religion ; it is true of all subjects, that the mind is

sure almost to be misled, which lies under a load of prejudice contracted from circumstances, in which it is next to impossible to weigh arguments justly, or to see clearly.

Fourthly; let them, let all, especially those who find themselves in a dissatisfied state of mind, fly to prayer. Let them pray earnestly and incessantly for God's assisting grace and influence: assisting, if it be his good pleasure, as well our minds and understandings in searching after truth, as our hearts and affections in obeying it. I say again, let us pray unceasingly for grace and help from the Spirit of God. When we pray for any worldly object, we may pray mistakenly. We may be ignorant of our own good; we may err egregiously concerning it. But when we pray for spiritual aid and grace, we are sure that we pray for what we want; for what, if granted, will be the greatest of all blessings. And we pray with hope, because we have this gracious assurance given us by the Lord himself of grace and mercy; "if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Matt. vii. 11.

S E R M O N XXXII.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.

The Efficacy of the Death of Christ.

HEBREWS, ix. 26. •

Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

THE salvation of mankind, and most particularly in so far as the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are concerned in it; and whereby he comes to be called our Saviour and our Redeemer, ever has been, and ever must be, a most interesting subject to all serious minds.

Now there is one thing in which there is no division or difference of opinion at all; which is, that the death of Jesus Christ is spoken of, in reference to human salvation, in terms and in a manner, in which the death of no person whatever is spoken of besides. Others have

died martyrs as well as our Lord. Others have suffered in a righteous cause, as well as he; but that is said of him, and of his death and sufferings, which is not said of any one else. An efficacy and a concern are ascribed to them, in the business of human salvation, which are not ascribed to any other.

What may be called the first Gospel declaration upon this subject, is the exclamation of John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming unto him: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." I think it plain, that when John called our Lord the Lamb of God, he spoke with a relation to his being sacrificed, and to the effect of that sacrifice upon the pardon of human sin; and this, you will observe, was said of him, even before he entered upon his office. If any doubt could be made of the meaning of the Baptist's expression, it is settled by other places, in which the like allusion to a Lamb is adopted; and where the allusion is specifically applied to his death, considered as a sacrifice.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the following words of Isaiah are, by Philip the evangelist, distinctly applied to our Lord, and to our Lord's death. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a Lamb dumb before his shearers: so opened he not his mouth; in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth:" therefore it was to his death, you see, that the description relates. Now, I say, that this is applied to Christ most distinctly; for the pious eunuch, who was reading the passage in his chariot, was at a loss to know to whom it should be applied. "I pray thee," saith he to Philip, "of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man?" And Philip, you read, taught him that it was spoken of Christ. And I say, secondly, that this particular part and expression of the prophecy being applied to Christ's death, carries the whole prophecy to the same subject: for it is undoubtedly one entire prophecy: therefore the other expressions, which are still stronger, are applicable as well as this. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of

of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed: the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is a strong and very apposite text of St. Peter's, in which the application of the term "Lamb" to our Lord, and the sense, in which it is applied, can admit of no question at all. It is in the 1st chapter of the 1st epistle, the 18th and 19th verses: "Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." All the use I make of these passages is to show, that the prophet Isaiah, six hundred years before his birth; St. John the Baptist, upon the commencement of his ministry; St. Peter his friend, companion, and apostle, after the transaction was over, speak of Christ's death, under the figure of a Lamb being sacrificed: that is, as having the effect of a sacrifice, the effect in kind, though infinitely higher in degree, upon the pardon of sins, and the procurement of salvation; and that this is spoken of the death of no other person whatever.

Other plain and distinct passages, declaring the efficacy of Christ's death, are the following; Hebrews, ix. 26. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." And in the xth chap. 12th ver. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." I observe again, that nothing of this sort is said of the death of any other person; no such efficacy is imputed to any other martyrdom. So likewise, in the following text, from the Epistle to the Romans: While we were yet sinners Christ died for us; much more then being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him: for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." "Reconciled to God by the death of his Son; therefore that death had an efficacy in our reconciliation; but reconciliation

is preparatory to salvation. The same thing is said by the same apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians: "He has reconciled us to his Father in his cross, and in the body of his flesh through death." What is said of reconciliation in these texts, it is said in other texts of sanctification, which also is preparatory to salvation. Thus, Hebrews, x. 10. "we are sanctified:" how? namely, "by the offering of the body of Christ once for all:" so again in the same epistle, "the blood of Jesus is called the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified."

In these and many more passages, that lie spread in different parts of the New Testament, it appears to be asserted, that the death of Christ had an efficacy in the procurement of human salvation. Now these expressions mean something: mean something substantial: they are used concerning no other person, nor the death of any other person whatever. Therefore Christ's death was something more than a confirmation of his preaching; something more than a pattern of a holy and patient, and perhaps voluntary, martyrdom; something more than necessarily antecedent to his resurrection, by which he gave a grand and clear proof of human resurrection. Christ's death was all these, but it was something more; because none of these ends, nor all of them, satisfy the text you have heard; come up to the assertions and declarations which are delivered concerning it.

Now allowing the subject to stop here; allowing that we know nothing, nor can know any thing concerning it, but what is written; and that nothing more is written, than that the death of Christ had a real and essential effect upon human salvation: we have certainly before us a doctrine of a very peculiar, perhaps I may say, of a very unexpected kind, in some measure hidden in the counsels of the divine nature, but still so far revealed to us, as to excite two great religious sentiments, admiration and gratitude.

That a person of a nature different from all other men; nay superior, for so he is distinctly described to be, to all created beings, whether men or angels:

united with the Deity as no other person is united; that such a person should come down from heaven, and suffer upon earth the pains of an excruciating death, and that these his submissions and sufferings should avail and produce a great effect in the procurement of the future salvation of mankind, cannot but excite wonder. But it is by no means improbable on that account; on the contrary it might be reasonably supposed beforehand, that if any thing was disclosed to us touching a future life, and touching the dispensations of God to men, it would be something of a nature to excite admiration. In the world in which we live, we may be said to have some knowledge of its laws and constitution, and nature: we have long experienced them: as also of the beings with whom we converse, or amongst whom we are conversant, we may be said to understand something: at least they are familiar to us: we are not surprised with appearances which every day occur. But of the world and the life to which we are destined, and of the beings amongst whom we may be brought, the case is altogether different. Here is no experience to explain things; no use or familiarity to take off surprise, to reconcile us to difficulties, to assist our apprehension. In the new order of things, according to the new laws of nature, every thing will be suitable; suitable to the beings who are to occupy the future world; but that suitability cannot, as it seems to me, be possibly perceived by us, until we are acquainted with that order, and with those beings. So that it arises, as it were from the necessity of things, that what is told us by a divine messenger of heavenly affairs, of affairs purely spiritual, that is, relating purely to another world, must be so comprehended by us, as to excite admiration.

But secondly; partially as we may, or perhaps must, comprehend this subject, in common with all subjects which relate strictly and solely to the nature of our future life, we may comprehend it quite sufficiently for one purpose; and that is gratitude. It was only for a moral purpose that the thing was revealed at all: and that purpose is a sense of gratitude and obligation. This was the use which

the apostles of our Lord, who knew the most, made of their knowledge. This was the turn they gave to their meditations upon the subject; the impression it left upon their hearts. That a great and happy Being should voluntarily enter the world in a mean and low condition, and humble himself to a death upon the cross, that is, to be executed as a malefactor, in order, by whatever means it was done, to promote the attainment of salvation to mankind, and to each and every one of themselves, was a theme they dwelt upon with feelings of the warmest thankfulness; because they were feelings proportioned to the magnitude of the benefit. Earthly benefits are nothing compared with those which are heavenly. That they felt from the bottom of their souls. That, in my opinion, we do not feel as we ought. But feeling this, they never ceased to testify, to acknowledge, to express the deepest obligation, the most devout consciousness of that obligation, to their Lord and Master; to him whom, for what he had done and suffered, they regarded as the finisher of their faith, and the author of their salvation.

SERMON XXXIII.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.

Pure Religion.

JAMES, i. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

NOTHING can be more useful than summary views of our duty, if they be well drawn and rightly understood. It is a great advantage to have our business laid before us altogether; to see at one comprehensive glance, as it were, what we are to do, and what we are not to do. It would be a great ease and satisfaction to both, if it were possible, for a master to give his servant directions for his conduct in a single sentence, which he, the servant had only to apply and draw out into practice, as occasions offer themselves, in order to discharge every thing which was required or expected from him. This, which is not practicable in civil life, is in a good degree so in a reli-

gious life; because a religious life proceeds more upon principle, leaving the exercise and manifestation of that principle more to the judgment of the individual, than it can be left where, from the nature of the case, one man is to act precisely according to another man's direction.

But then, as I have said, it is essentially necessary, that these summaries be well drawn up, and rightly understood; because if they profess to state the whole of men's duty, yet, in fact, state it partially and imperfectly, all who read them are misled, and dangerously misled. In religion, as in other things, we are too apt of ourselves to substitute a part for the whole. Substituting a part for the whole is the grand tendency of human corruption, in matters both of morality and religion; which propensity, therefore, will be encouraged, when that, which professes to exhibit the whole of religion, does not, in truth, exhibit the whole. What is *there* omitted, we shall omit; glad of the occasion and excuse. What is not set down as our duty, we shall not think ourselves obliged to perform, not caring to increase the weight of our own burthen. This is the case whenever we use summaries of religion, which, in truth, are imperfect and ill drawn. But there is another case more common, and productive of the same effect, and that is, when we misconstrue these summary accounts of our duty: principally when we conceive of them as intending to express more than they were really intended to express. For then it comes to pass, that, although they be right and perfect as to what they were intended for, yet they are wrong and imperfect as to what we construe and conceive them for. This observation is particularly applicable to the text. St. James is here describing religion not in its principle, but in its effects: and these *effects* are truly and justly and fully displayed. They are by the apostle made to consist of two large articles; in succouring the distress of others, and maintaining our own innocency. And these two articles do comprehend the whole of the effects of true religion; which were exactly what the apostle meant to describe. Had St. James intended to have set forth the motives and principles of religion, as they

ought to subsist in the heart of a Christian, I doubt not but he would have mentioned love to God, and faith in Jesus Christ; for from these must spring every thing good and acceptable in our actions. In natural objects it is one thing to describe the root of a plant, and another its fruits and flowers; and if we think a writer is describing the roots and fibres, when, in truth, he is describing the fruit or flowers, we shall mistake his meaning, and our mistake must produce great confusion. So in spiritual affairs it is one thing to set before us the principle of religion, and another the effects of it. These are not to be confounded. And if we apply a description to one which was intended for the other, we deal unfairly by the writer of the description, and erroneously by ourselves. Therefore, first, let no one suppose the love of God, the thinking of him, the being grateful to him, the fearing to disobey him, not to be necessary parts of true religion, because they are not mentioned in St. James's account of true religion. The answer is, that these compose the principles of true religion; St. James's account relates to the effects. In like manner concerning faith in Jesus Christ. St. James has recorded his opinion upon that subject. His doctrine is, that the tree which bears no fruit cannot be sound at the root; that the faith which is unproductive is not the right faith: but then this is allowing (and not denying,) that a right faith is the source and spring of true virtue: and had our apostle been asked to state the principle of religion, I am persuaded he would have referred us to a true faith. But that was not the inquiry: on the contrary, having marked strongly the fatuity of a faith, which produced no good effects upon life and action, he proceeds in the text to tell us what the effects are which it ought to produce; and these he disposes into two comprehensive classes (but still meaning to describe the effects of religion, and not its root or principle,) positive virtue and personal innocence.

Now, I say, that, for the purpose for which it was intended, the account given by St. James is full and complete. And it carries with it this peculiar advantage, that it very specially guards against an

error natural, I believe, and common in all ages of the world; which is, the making beneficence an apology for licentiousness; the thinking that doing good occasionally may excuse us from strictness in regulating our passions and desires. The text expressly cuts up this excuse, because it expressly asserts both things to be necessary to compose true religion. Where two things are necessary, one cannot excuse the want of the other. Now, what does the text teach? it teaches us what pure and undefiled religion is in its effects and in its practice: and what is it? "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Not simply to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction: that is not all; that is not sufficient; but likewise "to keep himself unspotted from the world."

To visit the fatherless* and widows in their affliction, is describing a class, or species, or kind of virtue, by singling out one eminent example of it. I consider the apostle as meaning to represent the value, and to enforce the obligation of active charity, of positive beneficence, and that he has done it by mentioning a particular instance. A stronger or properer instance could not have been selected: but still it is to be regarded as an instance, not as exclusive of other and similar instances, but as a specimen of these exertions. The case before us, as an instance, is heightened by every circumstance which could give to it weight and priority. The apostle exhibits the most forlorn and destitute of the human species, suffering under the severest of human losses; helpless children deprived of a parent, a wife bereaved of her husband, both sunk in affliction, under the sharpest anguish of their misfortunes. To visit, by which is meant to console, to comfort, to succour, to relieve, to assist such as these, is undoubtedly a high exercise of religion and benevolence, and well selected: but still it is to be regarded as an example, and the whole class of beneficent virtues as intended to be included. This is not only a just and fair, but a necessary construction: because, although the exercise of beneficence be a duty upon every man, yet the kind, the

examples of it, must be guided in a great degree by each man's faculties, opportunities, and by the occasions which present themselves. If such an occasion, as that which the text describes, present itself, it cannot be overlooked without an abandonment of religion: but if other and different occasions of doing good present themselves, they also, according to the spirit of our apostle's declaration, must be attended to, or we are wanting in the fruit of the same faith.

The second principal expression of the text, "to keep himself unspotted from the world," signifies the being clean and clear from the licentious practices to which the world is addicted. So that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father," consists in two things; beneficence and purity; doing good and keeping clear from sin. Not in one thing, but in two things: not in one without the other, but in both. And this, in my opinion, is a great lesson and a most important doctrine.

I shall not, at present, consider the case of those who are anxious, and effectually so, to maintain their personal innocency without endeavouring to do good to others; because I really believe it is not a common case. I think that the religious principle which is able to make men confine their passions and desires within the bounds of virtue, is, with very few exceptions, strong enough, at the same time, to prompt and put them upon active exertions.

Therefore I would rather apply myself to that part of the case which is more common, active exertions of benevolence accompanied with looseness of private morals. It is a very common character; but I say, in the first place, it is an inconsistent character: it is doing and undoing; killing and curing; doing good by our charity, and mischief by our licentiousness; voluntarily relieving misery with one hand, and voluntarily producing and spreading it with the other. No real advance is made in human happiness by this contradiction; no real betterness or improvement promoted.

But then, may not the harm a man does by his personal vices be much less than the good he does by his active virtues? This is a point, in which there is

large room for delusion and mistake. Positive charity and acts of humanity are often of a conspicuous nature, naturally and deservedly engaging the praises of mankind, which are followed by our own. No one does, no one ought to speak against them, or attempt to disparage them: but the effect of vice and licentiousness, not only in its immediate consequences, but in its remote and ultimate tendencies, which ought all to be included in the account—the mischief which is done by the example, as well as by the act—is seldom honestly computed by the sinner himself. But I do not dwell further upon this comparison, because I insist, that no man has a right to make it; no man has a right, whilst he is doing occasional good, and yet indulging his vices and his passions, to strike a balance, as it were, between the good and the harm. This is not Christianity; this is not pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, let the balance lie on which side it will. For our text declares (and our text declares no more than what the Scriptures testify from one end to the other,) that religion demands both. It demands active virtue, and it demands innocence of life. I mean it demands sincere and vigorous endeavours in the pursuit of active virtue, and endeavours equally sincere and firm in the preservation of personal innocence. It makes no calculation which is better; but it requires both.

Shall it be extraordinary, that there should be men, forward in active charity and in positive beneficence, who yet put little or no constraint upon their personal vices? I have said that the character is common, and I will tell you why it is common. The reason is (and there is no other reason,) that it is usually an easier thing to perform acts of beneficence, even of expensive and troublesome beneficence, than it is to command and controul our passions; to give up and discard our vices; to burst the bonds of the habits which enslave us. This is the very truth of the case: so that the matter comes precisely to this point. Men of active benevolence, but of loose morals, are men who are performing the duties which are easy to them, and omitting those which are hard. They may place their own

character to themselves in what view they please: but this is the truth of the case, and let any one say, whether this be religion; whether this be sufficient. The truly religious man, when he has once decided a thing to be a duty, has no farther question to ask; whether it be easy to be done, or whether it be hard to be done, it is equally a duty. It then becomes a question of fortitude, of resolution, of firmness, of self-command, and self-government; but not of duty or obligation; these are already decided upon.

But least of all (and this is the inference from the text, which I wish most to press upon your attention,) least of all does he conceive the hope of reaching heaven by that sort of compromise, which would make easy, nay perhaps pleasant duties, an excuse for duties which are irksome and severe. To recur, for the last time, to the instance mentioned in the text, I can very well believe, that a man of humane temper shall have pleasure in visiting, when by visiting he can succour, the fatherless and widow in their affliction: but if he believes St. James, he will find that this must be joined to and accompanied with another thing, which is neither easy nor pleasant, nay, must always almost be effected with pain and struggle, and mortification and difficulty,—the “keeping himself unspotted from the world.”

SERMON XXXIV.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D. D.

The agency of Jesus Christ since his ascension.

HEBREWS, *iii.* 8.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

THE assertion of the text might be supported by the consideration, that the mission and preaching of Christ have lost nothing of their truth and importance by the lapse of ages, which has taken place since his appearance in the world. If they seem of less magnitude, reality, and

concern to us at this present day, than they did to those who lived in the days in which they were carried on; it is only in the same manner as a mountain or a tower appears to be less, when seen at a distance. It is a delusion in both cases. In natural objects we have commonly strength enough of judgment to prevent our being imposed upon by these false appearances; and it is not so much a want or defect of, as it is a neglecting to exert and use, our judgment, if we suffer ourselves to be deceived by them in religion. Distance of space in one case, and distance of time in the other, make no difference in the real nature of the object; and it is a great weakness to allow them to make any difference in our estimate and apprehension. The death of Jesus Christ is, in truth, as interesting to us, as it was to those who stood by his cross: his resurrection from the grave is a pledge and assurance of *our* future resurrection, no less than it was of theirs who conversed, who eat and drank with him, after his return to life.

But there is another sense, in which it is still more materially true, that "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is personally living, and acting in the same manner; has been so all along, and will be so to the end of the world. He is the same in his person, in his power, in his office.

First, I say, that he is the same individual person, and is at this present time existing, living, acting. He is up on high. The clouds, at his ascension, received him out of human sight. But whither did he go? to sit for ever at the right hand of God. This is expressly declared concerning him. It is also declared of him, that death hath no more dominion over him; that he is no more to return to corruption. So that, since his ascension, he hath continued in heaven to live and act. His human body, we are likewise given to believe was changed upon his ascension, that is, was glorified, whereby it became fitted for heaven, and fitted for immortality: no longer liable to decay or age, but thenceforward remaining literally and strictly the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This change in the human person of Christ is in effect asserted, or rather is referred to,

as a thing already known, in that text of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, wherein we are assured, that hereafter Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body. Now, the natural body of Christ, before his resurrection at least, was like the natural body of other men; was not a glorious body. At this time, therefore, when Saint Paul calls it his glorious body (for it was after his ascension that Saint Paul wrote these words), it must have undergone a great change. In this exalted and glorified state our Lord was seen by Saint Stephen, in the moment of his martyrdom. Being full, you read, of the Holy Ghost, Stephen looked up steadfastly unto heaven, and saw the glory of God*, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. At that seemingly dreadful moment, even when the martyr was surrounded by a band of assassins, with stones ready in their hands to stone him to death, the spectacle, nevertheless, filled his soul with rapture. He cried out in ecstasy, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." The same glorious vision was vouchsafed to Saint Paul, at his conversion; and to Saint John, at the delivery of the revelations. This change of our Lord's body was a change, we have reason to believe, of nature and substance so as to be thenceforward incapable of decay or dissolution. It might be susceptible of any external form, which the particular purpose of his appearance should require. So when he appeared to Stephen and Paul, or to any of his saints, it was necessary he should assume the form which he had borne in the flesh, that he might be known to them. But it is not necessary to suppose that he was confined to that form. The contrary rather appears in the revelation of Saint John, in which, after once showing himself to the apostle, our Lord was afterwards represented to his eyes under different forms. All, however, that is of importance to us to know, all that belongs to our present subject to observe,

* The "glory of God," in Scripture, when spoken of as an object of vision, always, I think, means a luminous appearance, bright and resplendent, beyond the splendour of any natural object whatever.

is, that Christ's glorified person was incapable of dying any more: that it continues at this day; that it hath all along continued the same real, identical being, as that which went up into heaven in the sight of his apostles; the same essential nature, the same glorified substance, the same proper person.

But, secondly, He is the same also in power. The Scripture doctrine concerning our Lord seems to be this; that, when his appointed commission and his sufferings were closed upon earth, he was advanced in heaven to a still higher state than what he possessed before he came into the world*. This point, as well as the glory of his nature, both before and after his appearance in the flesh, is attested by Saint Paul, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He did not affect to be equal with God, or to appear with divine honours (for such is the sense, which the words in the original will bear), "but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Wherefore," i. e. for this his obedience even to the last extremity, even unto death, "God also hath highly exalted him;" or, as it is distinctly and perspicuously expressed in the original, "God also hath more highly exalted him," that is, to a higher state than what he even before possessed; insomuch that he hath "given him a name which is above every name; that at," or, more properly, *in*, "the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father:" exactly agreeable to what our Lord himself declared to his disciples after his resurrection,—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth:" (Matt. xxviii. 18.) You will observe in this passage of Saint Paul, not only the magnificent terms in which Christ's exaltation is described, viz. "that every knee should thenceforward bow in his name, and that every

tongue should confess him to be Lord;" but you will observe also, the comprehension and extent of his dominion,— "of things in heaven, of things on earth, of things under the earth." And that we are specifically comprised under this authority and this agency, either of the two following texts may be brought as a sufficient proof: "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you;" (Matt. xviii. 20.) which words of our Lord imply a knowledge of, an observation of, an attention to, and an interference with, what passes amongst his disciples upon earth. Or take his final words to his followers, as recorded by Saint Matthew: "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world,"—and they carry the same implication. And, lastly, that, in the most awful scene and event of our existence, the day of judgment, we shall not only become the objects, but the immediate objects, of Christ's power and agency, is set forth in two clear and positive texts; "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," (John, v. 25.) not the voice of God, but the voice of the Son of God. And then, pursuing the description of what will afterwards take place, our Lord adds, in the next verse but one,— "that the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man;" which is in perfect conformity with what Saint Paul announced to the Athenians, as a great and new doctrine, namely, "that God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Having shown that the power of Jesus Christ is a subsisting power at this time, the next question is, as to its duration. Now, so far as it respects mankind in this present world, we are assured that it shall continue until the end of the world. Some of the texts, which have been adduced, prove this point, as well as that for which they were quoted; and they are confirmed by Saint Paul's declaration, (1 Cor. xv. 24.) "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father:" therefore he

* See Sherlock's sermon on Phil. ii. 9.

shall retain and exercise it until *then*. But farther, this power is not only perpetual, but progressive; advancing and proceeding by different steps and degrees, until it shall become supreme and complete, and shall prevail against every enemy and every opposition. That our Lord's dominion will not only remain unto the end of the world, but that its effects in the world will be greatly enlarged and increased, is signified very expressly in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The apostle in this passage applies to our Lord a quotation from the Psalms: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet:" and then draws from it a strict inference: "for in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that he did not put under him." And then he remarks, as a fact, "but now we see *not yet* all things put under him:" that complete ~~entire~~ subjection, which is here promised, hath not yet taken place. The promise must, therefore, refer to a still future order of things. This doctrine of the progressive increase and final completeness, of our Lord's kingdom is also virtually laid down in the passage from the Corinthians already cited: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." For that this subjugation of his several enemies will be successive, one after another, is strongly intimated by the expression, "the *last* enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Now, to apprehend the probability of these things coming to pass, or rather to remove any opinion of their improbability, we ought constantly to bear in our mind this momentous truth, that in the hands of the Deity time is nothing, that he has eternity to act in. The Christian dispensation, nay, the world itself may be in its infancy. A more perfect display of the power of Christ, and of his religion, may be in reserve: and the ages which it may endure, after the obstacles and impediments to its reception are removed, may be, beyond comparison, longer than those which we have seen, in which it has been struggling with great difficulties, most especially with ignorance and prejudice. We ought not to be moved, any more than the apostles were moved, with the reflection which was cast upon their

mission, that since the "fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." We ought to return the answer which one of them returned: that what we call tardiness in the Deity, is not so; that our so thinking it, arises from not allowing for the different importance, nay, probably, for the different apprehension of time, in the divine mind and in ours; that with him a thousand years are as one day; words which confound and astonish human understanding, yet strictly and metaphysically true.

Again; we should remember, that the apostles, the very persons, who asserted that God *would* put all things under him, themselves, as we have seen, acknowledged that it was *not yet* done. In the mean time from the whole of their declarations and of this discussion we collect, that Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, is at this day, a great efficient Being in the universe, invested by his Father with a high authority, which he exercises, and will continue to exercise, until the end of the world.

Thirdly, he is the same in his office. The principal offices, assigned by the Scriptures to our Lord in his glorified state, that is, since his ascension into heaven, are those of a mediator and intercessor. Of the mediation of our Lord the Scripture speaks in this wise: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus:" (1 Tim. ii. 5.) It was after our Lord's ascension that this was spoken of him: and it is plain, from the form and turn of the expression, that his mediatorial character and office was meant to be represented as a perpetual character and office, because it is described in conjunction with the existence of God and men, so long as men exist: "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name:" "At that day ye shall ask in my name:" (John, xvi. 24, 26.) These words form part of our Lord's memorable conversation with his select disciples, not many hours before his death; and clearly intimate the mediatorial office, which he was to discharge after his ascension.

Concerning his *intercession*, not that which he occasionally exercised upon

earth, when he prayed, as he did most fervently for his disciples, but that which he now, at this present time, exercises, we have the following text, explicit, satisfactory, and full. "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood:" by priesthood is here meant the office of praying for others. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." No words can more plainly declare, than these words do, the perpetuity of our Lord's agency: that it did not cease with his presence upon earth, but continues. "He continueth ever: he ever liveth: he hath an unchangeable priesthood." Surely this justifies what our text saith of him; that he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and that not in a figurative or metaphorical sense, but literally, effectually, and really. Moreover, in this same passage, not only the constancy and perpetuity, but the power and efficacy of our Lord's intercession are asserted: "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." They must come unto God: they must come by him: and then he is able to save them completely.

These three heads of observation, namely, upon his person, his power, and his office, comprise the relation, in which our Lord Jesus Christ stands to us, whilst we remain in this mortal life. There is another consideration of great solemnity and interest, namely, the relation, which we shall bear to him in our future state. Now the economy, which appears to be destined for the human creation, I mean, for that part of it which shall be received to future happiness, is that they shall live in a state of local society with one another, and under Jesus Christ as their head: experiencing a sensible connexion amongst themselves, as well as the operation of his authority, as their Lord and governor. I think it likely that our Saviour had this state of things in view, when, in his final discourse with his apostles, he tells them: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also:"

(John, xiv. 2, 3.) And again, in the same discourse, and referring to the same economy. "Father," says he, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me:" for that this was spoken, not merely of the twelve, who were then sitting with Jesus, and to whom his discourse was addressed, but of his disciples in future ages of the world, is fairly collected from his words, (xvii. 20.) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me, through thy word." Since the prayer here stated was part of the discourse, it is reasonable to infer, that the discourse, in its object, extended as far as the prayer, which we have seen to include believers, as well of succeeding ages as of that then present.

Now concerning this future dispensation, supposing it to consist, as here represented, of accepted spirits, participating of happiness in a state of sensible society with one another, and with Jesus Christ himself at their head, one train of reflection naturally arises; namely, first, that it is highly probable there should be many expressions of Scripture which have relation to it; secondly, that such expressions must, by their nature, appear to us, at present, under a considerable degree of obscurity; which we may be apt to call a defect: thirdly, that the credit due to such expressions must depend upon their authority as portions of the written word of God, and not upon the probability, much less upon the clearness of what they contain; so that our comprehension of what they mean must stop at very general notions; and our belief in them rest in the deference to which they are entitled, as Scripture declarations. Of this kind are many, if not all, of those expressions, which speak so strongly of the value, and benefit, and efficacy of the death of Christ; of its sacrificial, expiatory, and atoning nature. We may be assured, that these expressions mean something real; refer to something real; though it be something, which is to take place in that future dispensation, of which we have been speaking. It is reasonable to expect, that, when we come to experience what that state is, the same

experience will open to us the distinct propriety of these expressions, their truth, and the substantial truth which they contain; and likewise show us, that, however strong and exalted the terms are which we see made use of, they are not stronger nor higher than the subject called for. But for the present we must be, what I own it is difficult to be, content to take up with very general notions, humbly hoping, that a disposition to receive and to acquiesce in what appears to us to be revealed, be it more or be it less, will be regarded as the duty which belongs to our subsisting condition, and the measure of information with which it is favoured: and will stand in the place of what, from our deep interest in the matter, we are sometimes tempted to desire, but which, nevertheless, might be unfit for us, a knowledge, which not only was, but which we perceived to be, fully adequate to the subject.

There is another class of expressions, which, since they professedly refer to circumstances that are to take place in this new state, and not before, will, it is likely, be rendered quite intelligible by our experience in that state; but must necessarily convey very imperfect information until they be so explained. Of this kind are many of the passages of Scripture, which we have already noticed, as referring to the changes which will be wrought in our mortal nature; and the agency of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the intervention of his power, in producing those changes; and the nearer similitude which our changed natures, and the bodies with which we shall then be clothed, will bear to his. We read, "that he shall change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body." A momentous assurance, no doubt: yet, in its particular signification, waiting to be cleared up by our experience of the event. So likewise are some other particular expressions relating to the same event, such as being "unclothed," "clothed upon," "the dead in Christ rising first;" "meeting the Lord in the air;" "they that are alive not preventing those that are asleep," and the like. These are all most interesting intimations; yet to a certain degree obscure. They answer the purpose of ministering to our hopes, and comfort, and

admonition, which they do without conveying any clear ideas; and this, and not the satisfaction of our curiosity, may be the grand purpose, for the sake of which intimations of these things were given at all. But then, in so far as they describe a change in the order of nature, of which change we are to be the objects, it seems to follow, that we shall be furnished with experience, which will discover to us the full sense of this language. The same remark may be repeated concerning the first and second death, which are expressly spoken of in the Revelations, and, as I think, alluded to and supposed in other passages of Scripture, in which they are not named.

The lesson, inculcated by the observation here pointed out, is this, that, in the difficulties which we meet with in interpreting Scripture, instead of being too uneasy under them, by reason of the obscurity of certain passages, or the degree of darkness which hangs over certain subjects, we ought first to take to ourselves this safe and consoling rule, namely, to make up for the deficiency of our knowledge by the sincerity of our practice; in other words, to act up to what we do know, or, at least, earnestly strive so to do. So far as a man holds fast to this rule, he has a strong ground of comfort under every degree of ignorance, or even of error. And it is a rule applicable to the rich and to the poor, to the educated and the uneducated, to every state and station of life; and to all the differences, which arise from different opportunities of acquiring knowledge. Different obligations may result from different means of obtaining information; but this rule comprises all differences.

The next reflection is, that in meeting with difficulties, nay, very great difficulties, we meet with nothing strange, nothing but what in truth might reasonably have been expected beforehand. It was to be expected, that a revelation, which was to have its completion in another state of existence, would contain many explications which referred to that state of our which, on account of such respect, this would be made clear and perfectly intelligible only to those who had experienced that state, and to us after we suffer attained to that experience; while, as of

ever, in the meantime, they may convey to us enough of information, to admonish us in our conduct, to support our hopes, and to incite our endeavours. Therefore the meeting with difficulties, owing to this cause, ought not to surprise us, nor to trouble us over much. Seriousness, nay, even anxiety, touching every thing, which concerns our salvation, no thoughtful man can help; but it is possible we may be distressed by doubts and difficulties more than there is any occasion to be distressed.

Lastly, under all our perplexities, under all the misgivings of mind, to which even good men (such is the infirmity of human nature) are subject, there is this important assurance to resort to, that we have a protection over our heads, which is constant and abiding: that God, blessed be his name, is for evermore: that Jesus Christ our Lord is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: that, like as a traveller by land or sea, go where he will, always sees, when he looks up, the same sun; so in our journey through a varied existence, whether it be in our present state, or in our next state, or in the awful passage from one to the other; in the world in which we live, or in the country which we seek; in the hour of death, no less than in the midst of health, we are in the same upholding hands, under the same sufficient and unfailing support.

SERMON XXXV

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D. D.

Neglect of Warnings.

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

THERE is one great sin, which, necessary, may not be amongst the number of which we are sensible, and of our consciences accuse us: and is the neglect of warnings.

It is our duty to consider this life not as a probationary state: nor ever think truly or act rightly, but

so long as we have this consideration fully before our eyes. Now one character of a state, suited to qualify and prepare rational and improveable creatures for a better state, consists in the warnings which it is constantly giving them; and the providence of God, by placing us in such a state, becomes the author of these warnings. It is his paternal care which admonishes us by and through the events of life and death that pass before us. Therefore it is a sin against Providence to neglect them. It is hardness and determination in sin; or it is blindness, which in whole or in part is wilful; or it is giddiness, and levity, and contemptuousness in a subject which admits not of these dispositions towards it, without great offence to God.

A serious man hardly ever passes a day, never a week, without meeting with some warning to his conscience; without something to call to his mind his situation with respect to his future life. And these warnings, as perhaps was proper, come the thicker upon us, the farther we advance in life. The dropping into the grave of our acquaintance, and friends, and relations, what can be better calculated, not to prove (for we do not want the point to be proved), but to possess our hearts with a complete sense and perception of the extreme peril and hourly precariousness of our condition; namely, to teach this momentous lesson, that when we preach to you concerning heaven and hell, we are not preaching concerning things at a distance, things remote; things long before they come to pass; but concerning things near, soon to be decided, in a very short time to be fixed one way or the other? This is a truth of which we are warned by the course of mortality; yet, with this truth confessed, with these warnings before us, we venture upon sin. But it will be said, that the events which ought to warn us are out of our mind at the time. But this is not so. Were it that these things came to pass in the wide world only at large, it might be that we should seldom hear of them, or soon forget them. But the events take place where we ourselves are; within our own doors; in our own families; amongst those with whom we have the most constant correspondence, the closest inter-

the strictest connection. It is impossible that such events can be out of our mind: nor is it the fact. The fact is, that, knowing them, we act in defiance of them: which is neglecting warnings in the worst sense possible. It aggravates the daringness; it aggravates the desperation of sin: but it is so nevertheless. Supposing these warnings to be sent by Providence, or that we believe, and have reason to believe, and ought to believe that they are so sent, then the aggravation is very great.

We have warnings of every kind. Even youth itself is continually warned, that there is no reliance to be placed, either on strength or constitution or early age: that, if they count upon life as a thing to be reckoned secure for a considerable number of years, they calculate most falsely: and if they act upon this calculation, by allowing themselves in the vices which are incidental to their years, under a notion that it will be long before they shall have to answer for them, and before that time come they shall have abundant season for repenting and amending: if they suffer such arguments to enter into their minds, and act upon them, then are they guilty of neglecting God in his warnings. They not only err in point of just reasoning, but they neglect the warnings which God has expressly set before them. Or, if they take upon themselves to consider religion as a thing not made or calculated for them; as much too serious for their years; as made and intended for the old and the dying; at least as what is unnecessary to be entered upon at present, as what may be postponed to a more suitable time of life: whenever they think thus, they think very presumptuously. They are justly chargeable with neglecting warnings. And what is the event? These postponers never enter upon religion at all, in earnest or effectually. That is the end and event of the matter. To account for this, shall we say, that they have so offended God by neglecting his warnings, as to have forfeited his grace? Certainly we may say that this is not the method of obtaining his grace; and that his grace is necessary to our conversion. Neglecting warnings is not the way to obtain God's grace: and God's grace is necessary to

conversion. The young, I repeat again, want not warnings. Is it new? is it unheard of? is it not, on the contrary, the intelligence of every week, the experience of every neighbourhood, that young men and young women are cut off? Man is, in every sense, a flower of the field. The flower is liable to be cut down in its bloom and perfection, as well as in its withering and its decays. So is man: and one probable cause of this ordination of Providence is, that no one of any age may be so confident of life as to allow himself to transgress God's laws; that all of every age may live in constant awe of their Maker.

I do admit, that warnings come the thicker upon us as we grow old. We have more admonitions both in our remembrances, and in our observations, and of more kinds. A man, who has passed a long life, has to remember preservations from danger, which ought to inspire him both with thankfulness and caution. Yet I fear we are very deficient in both these qualities. We call our preservations escapes, not preservations, and so we feel no thankfulness for them: nor do we turn them into religious cautions. When God preserved us, he meant to warn us. When such instances, therefore have no effect upon our minds, we are guilty before God of neglecting his warnings. Most especially if we have occasion to add to all other reasons for gratitude this momentous question, What would have become of us, what have been our condition, if we had rushed in the danger by which our lives were threatened? The parable of the fig-tree (Luke, xiii. verse 6.) is a most apt Scripture for persons under the circumstances we have described. When the Lord had said, "cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" he was entreated to try it one year longer; and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over (verses 3d and 5th), "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." If the present, or if the then, state of our conscience and of our soul call up this reflection, then are we very guilty indeed, if such preservations leave no religious impression upon us: or if we suffer the temporary impression to pass off

without producing in us a change for the better.

Infirmities, whether they be of health, or of age, decay, and weakness, are warnings. And it has been asked, with some degree of wonder, why they make so little impression as they do? One chief reason is this: they who have waited for warnings of this kind before they would be converted, have generally waited until they are become hardened in sin. Their habits are fixed. Their character has taken its shape and form. Their disposition is thoroughly infected and invested with sin. When it is come to this case, it is difficult for any call to be heard; for any warning to operate. It is difficult; but "with God all things are possible." If there be the will and the sincere endeavour to reform, the grace of God can give the power. Although, therefore, they who wait for the advances of age, the perception of decay, the probable approach of death, before they turn themselves seriously to religion, have waited much too long, have neglected, and despised, and defied many solemn warnings in the course of their lives; have waited indeed till it be next to impossible that they turn at all from their former ways: yet this is not a reason why they should continue in neglect of the warnings which now press upon them; and which at length they begin to perceive; but just the contrary. The effort is greater, but the necessity is greater. It is their last hope and their last trial. I put the case of a man grown old in sin. If the warnings of old age bring him round to religion, happy is that man in his old age, above any thing he was in any other part of his life. But if these warnings do not affect him, there is nothing left in this world which will. We are not to set limits to God's grace, operating according to his good pleasure; but we say there is nothing in *this world*; there is nothing in the course of nature, and the order of human affairs, which will affect him, if the feelings of age do not. I put the case of a man grown old in sin, and, though old, continuing the practice of sin: that, it is said, in the full latitude of the expression, describes a worse case than is commonly met with. Would to God that the case was more rare than it is! But

allowing it to be unusual in the utmost extent of the terms; in a certain considerable degree the description applies to many old persons. Many feel in their hearts, that the words "grown old in sin," belong to them in some sense which is very formidable. They feel some gross and defilement to be yet purged away; some deep corruption to be yet eradicated, some virtue or other to be yet even learnt, yet acquired, or yet, however, to be brought nearer to what it ought to be, than it has hitherto been brought. Now, if the warnings of age taught us nothing else, they might teach us this: that if these things are to be done, they must be done soon; they must be set about forthwith, in good earnest, and with strong resolution. The work is most momentous; the time is short. The day is far spent; the evening is come on; the night is at hand.

Lastly; I conceive that this discourse points out the true and only way of making old age comfortable; and that is, by making it the means of religious improvement. Let a man be beset by ever so many bodily complaints, bowed down by ever so many infirmities; if he find his soul grown and growing better, his seriousness increased, his obedience more regular and more exact, his inward principles and dispositions improved from what they were formerly, and continuing to improve; that man hath a fountain of comfort and consolation springing up within him. Infirmities, which have this effect, are infinitely better than strength and health themselves: though these, considered independently of their consequences, be justly esteemed the greatest of all blessings, and of all gifts. The old age of a virtuous man admits of a different and of a most consoling description.

It is this property of old age, namely, that its proper and most rational comfort consists in the consciousness of spiritual amendment. A very pious writer gives the following representation of this season of human life, when employed and occupied as it ought to be, and when life has been drawn to its close by a course of virtue and religion; "To the intelligent and virtuous," says our author, "old age presents a scene of tranquil enjoyment, of obedient appetites, of well regulated

lections, of maturity in knowledge, and of that preparation for immortality. In this serene and dignified state, placed, as we were, on the confines of two worlds, the mind of a good man reviews what is past, with the complacency of an approving conscience, and looks forward with humble confidence in the mercy of God, and with devout aspirations towards his eternal and ever increasing favour."

SERMON XXXVI.

By the Rev. WILLIAM PALEY, D.D.

Preservation and Recovery from Sin.

TITUS, ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

THERE are certain particular texts of Scripture which are of inestimable use; for that in a few, short, clear words, they show us the sum of our duty. Such texts ought to be deeply fixed and imprinted upon our memories; to be written, indeed, upon our hearts. The text, which I have read to you, is entitled to this distinction. No single sentence that ever was written down for the direction of mankind, comprises more important truth in less room. The text gives us a rule of life and conduct; and tells us, that to lay down for mankind this rule, and enforce it by the promise of salvation, was a great object of the Gospel being published in the world. The Gospel might include other objects, and answer other purposes; but as far as related to the regulation of life and conduct, this was its object and its purpose. The rule, you hear, is, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." We must begin "by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts:" which means, that we must resist or break off all sins of licentiousness, debauchery, and intemperance; for these are specifically meant by world-

ly lusts. And these must be *denied*; that is, they must either be withstood in the first instance, or the evil courses into which they have drawn us must be broken off.

When a rule of morals is plain and positive, it is seldom that there is any advantage in enlarging upon the rule itself. We only weaken it by dilating it. I shall employ, therefore, my present discourse in offering such heads of advice as may be likely, by God's blessing, to assist us in rendering obedience to the rule laid down for us; an obedience upon which salvation depends.

First, then, I observe concerning licentious practices, that it is most practicable to be entirely innocent; that it is a more easy thing to withstand them altogether, than it is to set bounds to their indulgence. This is a point not sufficiently understood; though true it is, not believed. Men know not what they are doing when they enter upon vicious courses: what a struggle, what a contest, what misery, what torment they are preparing for themselves. I trust that there is hardly a man or woman living who enters into a course of sin with the design of remaining in it to the end; who can brave the punishment of hell; who intends to die in that state of sure perdition, to which a course of unrepented sin must bring him or her. No, that is not the plan even of the worst, much less of the generality of mankind. Their plan is to allow themselves to a certain length, and there stop, for a certain time, and then reform; in such and such opportunities and temptations, but in no more. Now, to such persons and to such plans, I say this, that it would not have cost them one-tenth of the mortification, pain and self-denial, to have kept themselves at a distance from sin, that it must and will cost them to break it off: adding the further consideration, that, so long as men preserve their innocence, the consciousness of doing what is right is both the strongest possible support of their resolution, and the most constant source of satisfaction to their thoughts: but that when men once begin to give way to vicious indulgences, another state of things takes place in their breasts. Disturbance at the heart, strug-

gles and defeats, resolutions and relapses, self-reproach and self-condemnation, drive out all quietness and tranquillity of conscience. Peace with us is at an end. All is unsettled. Did the young and unexperienced know the truth of this matter; how much easier it is to keep innocency than to return to it; how great and terrible is the danger that they do not return to it at all; surely they would see, and see in a light strong enough to influence their determination, that to adhere inviolably to the rules of temperance, soberness, and chastity, was their safety, their wisdom, their happiness. How many bitter thoughts does the innocent man avoid? Serenity and cheerfulness are his portion. Hope is continually pouring its balm into his soul. His heart is at rest, while others are goaded and tortured by the stings of a wounded conscience, the remonstrances and risings up of principles which they cannot forget; perpetually teased by returning temptations, perpetually lamenting defeated resolutions. "There is no peace unto the wicked, saith my God." There is no comfort in such a life as this, let a man's outward circumstances be what they will. Genuine satisfaction of mind is not attainable under the recurring consciousness of being immersed in a course of sin, and the still remaining prevalence of religious principles. Yet either this must be the state of a sinner till he recover again his virtuous courses, or it must be a state infinitely worse; that is, it must be a state of entire surrender, of himself to a life of sin, which will be followed by a death of despair, by ruin final and eternal; by the wrath of God; by the pains of hell.

But, secondly, in what manner, and by what methods are sins to be broken off? for although the maxim which we have delivered be perfectly and certainly true, namely, that it is ease and happiness to preserve innocence entirely, compared with what it is to recover our innocence, or even to set bounds to guilt, yet it is a truth which all cannot receive. I do not mean that all will not acknowledge it, for I believe that those will be most ready to give their assent to it, who feel themselves bound and entangled by the chain of their sin. But it is not

applicable to every man's case; because many having already fallen into vicious courses, have no longer to consider how much better, how much happier it would have been for them, to have adhered closely to the laws of virtue and religion at first, but how to extricate themselves from the bad condition in which they are placed at present. Now to expect to break off sin, in any manner, without pain and difficulty, is a vain expectation. It is to expect a moral impossibility. Such expectations ought not to be held out, because they are sure to deceive; and because they who act under such encouragement, finding themselves deceived, will never persist in their endeavours to any purpose of actual reformation. All mankind feel a reluctance to part with their sins. It must be so. It arises from the very nature of temptation, by which they are drawn into sin. Feeling then this strong reluctance, it is very natural for men to do what great numbers do, namely, propose to themselves to part with their sins *by degrees*; thinking that they can more easily do it in this way than in any other. It presents to their view a kind of compromise; a temporary hope of enjoyment, for the present, at least, the criminal pleasures to which they have addicted themselves, or the criminal advantages they are making, together with the expectation of a final reform. I believe, as I have already said, that this is a course into which great numbers fall; and therefore it becomes a question of very great importance whether it be a safe and successful course or not. What I am speaking of is the trying to break off our sins by degrees. Now, in the first place, it is contrary to principle. A man is supposed to feel the guilt and danger of the practices which he follows. He must be supposed to perceive this, because he is supposed to resolve to quit them. His resolution is founded upon, springs from, this perfection. Wherefore I say, that it is in contradiction to principle, to allow ourselves even once more to sin, after we have truly become sensible of the guilt, the danger, and the consequences of it. It is, from that time, known and wilful sin. I own I do not see how the plan of gradually diminishing a sinful habit can be consistent with

or can proceed from, sincere religious principles: for, as to what remains of the habit, it implies an express allowance of ourselves in sin, which is utterly inconsistent with sincerity. Whoever continues in the practice of any one known sin, in defiance of God's commands, cannot, so continuing, hope to find mercy: but with respect to so much of the habit as is yet allowed by him to remain, he is so continuing, and his continuance is part of his plan. These attempts, therefore, at gradual reformation, do not proceed from a true vital religious principle: which principle, succoured by God's grace, is the only thing that can stand against sin strengthened by habit.

So I should reason upon the case, looking at it in its own nature. The next question is, How is it in fact? Is it in fact better? Is it in experience more successful than from its nature we should expect it to be? Now I am much afraid, that all the proof which can be drawn either from observation, or consciousness; is against it. Of other men we must judge by observation: of ourselves by consciousness. What happens then to gradual reformation? Perpetual relapses, perpetually defeated and weakened resolutions. The principle of resistance is weakened by every relapse. Did the mortification of a defeat incite and quicken men to stronger efforts, it would be well. But it has a contrary effect; it renders every succeeding exertion more feeble. The checked indulgences, which, in the progress of our fancied amendment, we allow ourselves, are more than sufficient to feed desire, to keep up the force and strength of temptation: nay, perhaps the temptation acquires more force from the partial curb which we impose upon it. Then while the temptation remains with unabated, or perhaps augmented, strength, our resolution is suffering continual relaxation; our endeavours become unsatisfactory even to ourselves. This miserable struggle cannot be maintained long. Although nothing but persevering in it could save us, we do not persevere. Finding not ease, but difficulty, increased and increasing difficulty, men give up the cause: that is, they try to settle themselves into some mode of thinking which may quiet their

consciences and their fears. They fall back to their sins: and when they find their consciences easier, they think they are guilt less, whereas it is only their conscience that is become more insensible, their reasoning more treacherous and deceitful. The danger is what it was, or greater; the guilt is so too. Would to God we could say, that gradual reforms were frequently successful. They are what men often attempt: they are, alas, what men usually fail in.

It is painful to seem to discourage endeavours of any kind after amendment: but it is necessary to advertise men of their danger. If one method of going about an important work be imposing in expectation, and yet, in truth, likely to end in ruin, can any thing be more necessary than to set forth this danger and this consequence plainly? This is precisely the case with gradual reforms. They do not very much alarm our passions; they soothe our consciences. They do not alarm our passions, because the absolute rupture is not to come yet. We are not yet entirely and totally to bid adieu to our pleasures and indulgences, never to enjoy or return to them any more. We only have in view to wean and withdraw ourselves from them by degrees; and this is not so harsh and formidable a resolution as the other. Yet it soothes our consciences. It presents the semblance and appearance of repenting and reforming. It confesses our sense of sin and danger. It takes up the purpose, it would fain encourage us with the hope, of delivering ourselves from this condition. But what is the result? Feeding in the mean time, and fomenting those passions which are to be controlled and resisted, adding, by every instance of giving way to them, fresh force and strength to habits which are to be broken off, our constancy is subdued before our work is accomplished. We continue yielding to the inportunity of temptation. We have gained nothing by our miserable endeavour, but the mortification of defeat. Our sins are still repeated. The state of our salvation is where it was. Oh! it is a laborious, a difficult, a painful work, to shake off sin; to change the course of a sinful life; to quit gratifications to which we have been accus-

tomed, because we perceive them to be unlawful gratifications; and to find satisfaction in others which are innocent and virtuous. If in one thing more than another we stand in need of God's holy succour and assistance, of the aid and influence of his blessed Spirit upon our souls, it is in the work of reformation. But can we reasonably expect it whilst we are not sincere? And I say again, that the plan of gradual reformation is in contradiction to principle, and so far insincere. Is there not reason to believe that this may in some measure account for the failure of these resolutions?

But it will be asked of us, what better plan have we to offer? We answer, to break off our sins *at once*. This is properly to *deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts. This is truly to do, what, according to the apostle, the Grace of God teaches us to do. Acting thus, we may pray, we may humbly hope for the assistance of God's spirit in the work and struggle through which we have to go. And I take upon me to say, that all experience is in favour of this plan, in preference to that of a gradual reform; in favour of it, both with respect to ease and happiness. We do not pretend but that a conflict with desire must be supported, but that great resolution is necessary: yet we teach, that the pain of the effort is lessened by this method, as far as it can be lessened at all. Passions *yielded*, firmly denied and resisted, and not kept up by occasional indulgences, lose their power of tormenting. Habits, absolutely and totally disused, lose their hold. It is the nature of man. They then leave us at liberty to seek and to find happiness elsewhere, in better things: to enjoy, as well as to practise, virtue; to draw comfort from religion; to dwell upon its hopes; to pursue its duties; to acquire a love, a taste, and relish for its exercises and meditations.

One very general cause of entanglement in habits of sin, is the connexion which they have with our way of life, with our business, with the objects that are continually thrown in our way, with the practices and usages which prevail in the company we keep. Every condition of life has its particular temptation. And not only so, but when we have fallen into

evil habits, these habits so mix themselves with our method of life, return so upon us at their usual times, and places, and occurrence of objects, that it becomes very difficult to break the habit without a general change of our whole system. Now I say, whenever this is a man's case, that he cannot shake off his sins without giving up his way of life, he must give up that also, let it cost what it will. For it is, in truth, no other sacrifice than what our Saviour himself in the strongest terms enjoins, when he bids his disciples to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand (that is, surrender whatever is most dear or valuable to them), that they be not cast with all their members into hell fire. If a trade or business cannot be followed without giving into practices which conscience does not approve, we must relinquish the trade or business itself. If it cannot be followed without bringing us into the way of temptation to intemperance, more than we can withstand, or in fact do withstand, we must also relinquish it, and turn ourselves to some safer course. If the company we keep, the conversation we hear, the objects that surround us, tend to draw us, and do in fact draw us, into debauchery and licentiousness, we must fly from the place, the company, and the objects, no matter with what reluctance we do so, or what loss and inconvenience we suffer by doing it. This may appear to be a hard lesson? it is, nevertheless, what right reason dictates, and what, as hath already been observed, our Saviour himself enjoins, in terms made as strong and forcible as he could make them.

Sometimes men are led by prudential motives, or by motives of mere inclination, to change their employment, their habitation, or their station of life. These occasions, afford excellent and invaluable opportunities for correcting and breaking off any vicious habits which we may have contracted. It is when many associations, which give strength to a sinful habit, are interrupted and dissolved by the change which has taken place, that we can best resolve to conquer the sin, and set out upon a new course and a new life. The man who does not take advantage of such opportunities when they arise, has not the salvation of his

soul at heart: nevertheless, they are not to be waited for.

But to those sudden changes which we recommend, will it be objected that they are seldom lasting? Is this the fact? Are they more liable to fail, than attempts to change gradually? I think not. And there is always this difference between them. A sudden change is sincere at the time: a gradual change never is such truly and properly: and this is a momentous distinction. In every view and in every allowance, and in every plea of human frailty, we must distinguish between what is consistent with sincerity, and what is not. And in these two methods of setting about a reformation, by reason of their different character in this respect, the first may, though with fear and humility, expect the help of God's aiding Spirit, the other hardly can. For whilst not by surprise and unpremeditatedly we fall into casual sins, but whilst by plan and upon system we allow ourselves in licences, which, though not so many or so great as before, are still, whenever they are indulged, so many known sins; whilst, in a word, though we imagine ourselves to be in a progress of amendment, we yet deliberately continue to sin, our endeavours are so corrupted, I will not say by imperfection, but by insincerity, that we can hardly hope to call down upon them the blessing of Almighty God.

Reformation is never impossible; nor, in a strict sense, can it be said to be doubtful. Nothing is, properly speaking, doubtful, which it is in a man's power to accomplish; nothing is doubtful to us, but what is placed out of the reach of our will, or depends upon causes which we cannot influence; and this is not the case with reformation from sin. On the other hand, if we look to experience, we are compelled, though with grief of heart, to confess, that the danger is very great of a man, who is engaged in a course of sin, never reforming from his sin at all. Oh, let this danger be known! Let it stand, like a flaming sword, to turn us aside from the road to vice. Let it offer itself in its full magnitude. Let it strike, as it ought, the souls of those who are upon the brink,

perhaps, of their whole future fate; who are tempted; and who are deliberating about entering some course of sin.

Let also the perception and conviction of this danger sink deep into the hearts of all who are in such a situation, as that they must either reform or perish. They have it in their power, and it must be now their only hope, by strong and firm exertion, to make themselves an exception to the general lot of habitual sinners. It must be an exception. If they leave things to their course, they will share the fate in which they see others, involved in guilt like themselves, and their lives. It is only by a most strenuous effort they can rescue themselves from it. We apprise them, that their best hope is in a sudden and complete change, sincerely begun, faithfully persisted in; broken, it is possible, by human frailty, but never changed into a different plan, never declining into a compromised, partial, gradual reform; on the contrary, resumed with the same sincerity as that with which it set out, and with a force of resolution, and an earnestness of prayer, increased in proportion to the clearer view they have acquired of their danger and of their want.

SERMON XXXVII.

By the Rev. Dr. ISAAC BARROW.

Of the Excellency of the Christian Religion.

1 Cor. ii. 6.

We shall speak wisdom to those which are perfect.

THE meaning of these words I take to be this: "That however some parts of the Christian doctrine, which St. Paul discovered unto those whom he instructed therein, without the advantages of subtle reasoning or elegant language, might seem to persons really ignorant, or be thought foolish and unreasonable by men prepossessed with contrary notions and corrupt affections: yet that the whole doctrine when entirely disclosed unto perfect men, such as are of adult and improved understandings, void of prejudice and free from vicious dispositions, would

appear wisdom: that is, not only exactly true, but highly important and well adapted to attain the best ends, even such as are manifestly the most excellent, namely, the glorifying of God, and the salvation of men." This seems to be the meaning of St. Paul's assertion; and from hence I will endeavour briefly to represent some of the peculiar excellencies and perfections of the Christian religion, whereby the truth and wisdom thereof will be fully evinced.

The first excellency peculiar to the Christian doctrine, is, that it gives us a true, proper, and complete character or notion of God; such as perfectly agrees with what the best reason dictates, the works of nature declare, ancient tradition doth attest, and common experience testify: such a character as tends to produce in us love and reverence towards God, and to engage us to the strictest duty and obedience. It ascribes unto him the highest and greatest perfections of nature. In his essence it represents him one, eternal, perfectly simple and pure, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, independent, impassible, and immutable; also as to his will and manner of acting, most absolute and free, good and benign, holy and just, true and faithful. It acknowledges him the maker and preserver of all beings, both material and immaterial, visible and invisible. It attributes to him supreme majesty and authority over all: it informs us, that he framed this visible world for our use and benefit, preserving it, and governing us, with a particular care and providence. It discovers to us, that he deals very tenderly with rational creatures, being exceedingly careful of their good, most beneficent and merciful towards them; that he compassionates their suffering, is inclinable and ready to help them in their need, and to pardon their offences, if they earnestly desire and apply to him for it; and yet not so, as to indulge them in any wicked practices; he being impartially just, and inflexibly severe, towards all who obstinately persist in their iniquities. In short, it describes him most amiable in his goodness, most terrible in his justice, most glorious and righteous in all his ways of providence. In the Christian doctrine, there is nothing in-

termixed unworthy of, or misbecoming God, nothing added which is repugnant to what natural light discovers and approves; though it discovers something which that could not, concerning God's incomprehensible nature and manner of existence, his unsearchable counsels of wisdom, his admirable methods of providence, whereby he displays his goodness and glorifies his justice. And as it became God to reveal these truths which were not in the power of man to comprehend, so they wonderfully conspiring with those perfections of God, which are otherwise discernible by us, do most evidently confirm the divinity of them. For as the gospel relates nothing of divine things contradictory to reason, though it informs us of many particulars which no man's understanding could ever conceive and penetrate; we may therefore justly presume it came from a superior wisdom, and to be worthy of God. That God should send down his eternal Son to partake of our nature, and appear in our flesh, that he might thereby with the utmost advantage discover God's merciful intention towards us, and set before us an exact pattern of good life; that by his obedience and patience he might expiate our sins and reconcile us to God, also raise in us a hope of, and lead us in the way to, eternal happiness; this is, indeed, a mystery, a depth of wisdom, far exceeding our thought or contrivance, and which, though not contrary to reason, yet is what we may better admire, than we can understand. O let us on the occasion say with Job and the Psalmist, *Lord, what is man that thou shouldst thus magnify and set thy heart upon him; or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him?*

And thus to instil into the minds of men a right and worthy notion of God, is most evidently a great excellency of any doctrine or religion; for according to men's conceptions of God, their practice whether religious or moral will be very much regulated. If men conceive well of God, that will induce them to render him such worship and obedience, as is worthy of, and acceptable to him; if they are ignorant of, or mistaken about him, they will perform such services, as will neither become nor please him.

A second great excellency, peculiar to the Christian religion, is, that it gives us a faithful account of ourselves, concerning our nature, original, and end; of our state, past, present, and to come; points about which no reason, history or experience could ever otherwise resolve or satisfy us in. It teaches us that we consist of a frail and mortal body, fashioned by God out of the earth, and of an immortal spirit derived from heaven, whereby we understand the dignity of our nature, the great obligations we lie under to God, and how we ought to behave both towards him and ourselves, answerable to and worthy of such a high birth and quality. It informs us that we were originally designed by a voluntary obedience to glorify our Maker, and by so doing to partake of his eternal joy and felicity; and that we were accordingly created in a state agreeable to those purposes, fit to serve God, and capable thereby to continue for ever happy; but that by our wilful disobedience we lapsed from thence, into a wretched state of blindness, disorder, filth, sorrow, and trouble. It farther acquaints us, how being thus alienated from God, and exposed to the effects of his just displeasure, we are yet again by his exceeding mercy and favour put into a capacity of being far more happy than we were before, if we will return unto God, and comply with his revealed will; or if we obstinately continue in our degeneracy and disobedience, that we shall most assuredly plunge ourselves deeper into an abyss of endless misery. It fully represents to us, what shall be our future state and final doom, according to our demeanor and deserts in this life; what a strict trial, a severe judgment all our actions, even our passant words and most secret thoughts, must hereafter undergo, and how we shall be either exceedingly happy or extremely miserable for ever. It is this doctrine only which fully resolves us, wherein the final end and happiness of man consisteth, and what is the way of attaining it; assuring us it consists, not in a confluence of temporal things, but in the favour and enjoyment of God; and that this happiness is only to be obtained by a sincere and constant obedience to God's holy laws, by the practice of such piety

and virtue as this doctrine prescribes. These important truths, so useful to satisfy our minds and direct our lives, are in the gospel very clearly revealed; namely, that man was at first made in a happy state, and fell from thence by his misbehaviour; that he afterwards became prone to vice and subject to pain; that our souls survive the body; and that after this life there shall be a day of reckoning and judgment, according to which good men, who are here often much afflicted, shall be then rewarded with joy and glory; and bad men, who commonly prosper here, shall be severely punished; these are points that the wisest men have always surmised, yet could not be certain of; but whose rational conjectures our religion doth positively and expressly assert and establish.

Another peculiar excellency of our religion is, that it prescribes an accurate rule of life, most agreeable to reason and to our nature, most conducive to our welfare and content, tending to procure each man's private good, and to promote the public benefit of all, by the strict observance whereof we bring our human nature to a resemblance of the divine; and we shall also thereby obtain God's favour, oblige and benefit men, and procure to ourselves the conveniences of a sober life, and the pleasure of a good conscience. For if we examine the precepts which respect our duty to God, what can be more just, pleasant or beneficial to us, than are those duties of piety which our religion enjoins? What is more fit and reasonable, than that we should most highly esteem and honour him, who is most excellent? that we should bear the sincerest affection for him, who is perfect goodness himself, and most beneficial to us? that we should have the most awful dread of him, that is infinitely powerful, holy and just? that we should be very grateful to him, from whom we received our being, with all the comforts and conveniences of it? that we should entirely trust and hope in him, who can and will do whatever we may in reason expect from his goodness, nor can he ever fail to perform his promises? that we should render all due obedience to him, whose children, servants, and subjects we are? Can there be a higher privilege

than to have liberty of access to him, who will favourably hear, and is fully able to supply our wants? Can we desire to receive benefits on easier terms than the asking for them? Can a more gentle satisfaction for our offences be required, than confessing of them, repentance, and strong resolutions to amend them? The practice of such a piety, of a service so reasonable, cannot but be of vast advantage to us, as it procures peace of conscience, a comfortable hope, a freedom from all terrors and scruples of mind, from all tormenting cares and anxieties.

And if we consider the precepts by which our religion regulates our carriage and behaviour towards our neighbours and brethren, what can be imagined so good and useful, as those which the gospel affords? It enjoins us sincerely and tenderly to love one another; earnestly to desire and delight in each other's good; heartily to sympathize with all the evils and sorrows of our brethren; readily affording them all the help and comfort we are able; willingly to part with our substance, ease, and pleasure for their benefit and relief; not confining this our charity to particular friends and relations; but, in conformity to the boundless goodness of Almighty God, extending it to all. It requires us mutually to bear with one another's infirmities, mildly to resent and freely remit all injuries; retaining no grudge, nor executing no revenge, but requiting our enemies with good wishes and good deeds. It commands us to be quiet in our stations, diligent in our callings, true in our words, upright in our dealings, observant of our relations, obedient and respectful to our superiors, meek and gentle to our inferiors, modest and lowly, ingenuous and condescending in our conversation, candid in our censures; and innocent, inoffensive, and obliging in our behaviour towards all persons. It enjoins us to root out of our hearts all envy and malice, all pride and haughtiness; to restrain our tongues from all slander, detraction, reviling, bitter and harsh language; not to injure, hurt, or needlessly trouble our neighbour. It engages us to prefer the public good before our own opinion, humour, advantage, or convenience. And would men

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observe and practise what this excellent doctrine teaches; how sociable, secure, and pleasant a life we might lead! what a paradise would this world then become, in comparison to what it now is?

If we further survey the laws and directions of our religion, with regard to the management of our souls and bodies, we shall also find that nothing could be devised more worthy of us, more agreeable to reason, or more productive of our welfare. It obliges us to preserve unto our reason its natural prerogative and due empire; not to suffer the brutish part to usurp and domineer over us; not to be enslaved to bodily temper, or deluded by vain fancy, to commit that which is unworthy or, or mischievous to us. It enjoins us to have sober and moderate thoughts concerning ourselves, suitable to our total dependance on God, to our natural meanness, weakness, and sinful inclinations; and that we should not be puffed up with self-conceit, or vain confidence in our wealth, honour, and prosperity. It directs us to compose our minds into a calm, serene, and cheerful state; that we should not easily be moved with anger, distracted with care or trouble, nor disturbed with any accident; but that we should learn to be content in every condition, and patiently bear all events that may happen to us. It commands us to restrain our appetites, to be temperate in our enjoyments; to abstain from all irregular pleasures, which may corrupt our minds, impair our health, lessen our estate, stain our good name, or prejudice our repose. It doth not prohibit us the use of any creature, that is innocent, convenient, or delightful; but indulgeth us a prudent and sober use of them, so as we are thankful to God, whose goodness bestows them. It orders us to sequester our minds from the fading glories, unstable possessions, and vanishing delights of this world; things which are unworthy the attention and affection of an immortal spirit; and that we should fix our thoughts, desires, and endeavours on heavenly and spiritual objects, which are infinitely pure, stable, and durable: *not to love the world and the things therein, but to cast all our care on God's providence; not to trust in uncertain riches,*

but to have our treasure, our heart, hope, and conversation in heaven. And as our religion delivers a most excellent and perfect rule of life, so it chiefly requires from us a rational and spiritual service. The ritual observances it enjoins are in number few, in nature easy to perform, also very reasonable, decent, and useful; apt to instruct us in, and excite us to the practice of our duty. And our religion hath this farther peculiar advantage, that it sets before us a living copy of good practice. Example yields the most compendious instruction, the most efficacious incitement to action; and never was there any example so perfect in itself, so fit for our imitation, as that of our blessed Saviour; intended by him to conduct us through all the parts of duty, especially in those most high and difficult ones, that of charity, self-denial, humility, and patience. His practice was suited to all degrees and capacities of men, and so tempered, that persons of all callings might easily follow him in the paths of righteousness, in the performance of all substantial duties towards God and man. It is also an example attended with the greatest obligations and inducements to follow it, whether we consider the great excellency and dignity of the person, (who was the most holy son of God,) or our manifold relations to him, being our lord and master, our best friend and most gracious redeemer; or the inestimable benefits we have received from him, even redemption from extreme misery, and being put into a capacity of the most perfect happiness; all which are so many potent arguments engaging us to imitate him.

Again, our religion doth not only fully acquaint us with our duty, but, which is another peculiar virtue thereof, it builds the same on the most solid foundation. Indeed, ancient philosophers have highly commended virtue, and earnestly recommended the practice of it; but the grounds on which they laid its praise, and the arguments used to enforce its practice, were very weak; also the principles from whence it was deduced, and the ends they proposed, were poor and mean, if compared with ours. But the christian doctrine recommends goodness to us, not only as agreeable to man's im-

perfect and fallible reason, but as conformable to the perfect goodness, infallible wisdom, and most holy will of God; and which is enjoined us by this unquestionable authority, as our indispensable duty, and the only way to happiness. The principles from whence it directs our actions, are love, reverence, and gratitude to God; good-will to men, and a due regard to our own welfare. The ends which it prescribes are God's honour and the salvation of men; it excites us to the practice of virtue, by reminding us that we shall thereby resemble the supreme goodness, express our gratitude to our great benefactor, discharge our duty to our almighty lord and king; that we shall thereby avoid the wrath and displeasure of God, and certainly obtain his favour, mercy, and every blessing necessary for us; that we shall escape not only the terrors of conscience here, but future endless misery and torment; that we shall procure not only present comfort and peace of mind, but acquire crowns of everlasting glory and bliss. These are the firmest grounds on which virtue can subsist, and the most effectual motives to the embracing of it.

Another peculiar advantage of Christianity, and which no other law or doctrine could ever pretend to, is, that as it clearly teaches and strongly persuades us to so excellent a way of life, so it sufficiently enables us to practise it; without which, such is the frailty of our nature, that all instruction, exhortation, and encouragement would little avail. The Christian law is no dead letter, but hath a quickening spirit attending it. It sounds the ear and strikes the heart of him who sincerely embraces it. To all good men it is a sure guide, and safety from all evil. If our minds are dark or doubtful, it directs us to a faithful oracle, where we may receive counsel and information; if our passions and appetites are unruly and outrageous; if temptations are violent and threaten to overbear us, it leads us to a full magazine, where we may supply ourselves with all proper arms to withstand and subdue them. If our condition is disconsolate or desperate, here we may apply for relief and assistance: for on our earnest seeking and asking, it offers us the wisdom and power of

God himself to direct, assist, support, and comfort us in all exigencies. To them, who with due fervency and constancy ask it, God hath promised in the gospel, to *grant his holy spirit*, to direct them in their ways, to admonish them of their duty, to strengthen them in obedience, to secure them from temptations, to support them in affliction. As this is peculiar to our religion, so it is of considerable advantage. For what would the more perfect rule signify, without power to observe, and knowledge to discern it? and how can a creature so ignorant, impotent, and inconstant as man; who is so easily deluded by false appearances, and transported with disorderly passions; know how to conduct himself, without some guide and assistance; or how to prosecute what is good for him, especially in cases of intricacy and difficulty? how can such an one continue in a good state, or recover himself from a bad one, or attain any virtuous habit, did he not apprehend such a friendly power ready on all occasions to guard and defend him? It is this consideration only that can nourish our hope, excite our courage, and quicken our endeavours in religious practice; as it assures us that there is no duty so hard, which by God's grace we may not perform, and no enemy so mighty, which, by his help, we cannot conquer; for though we are not able to do any thing of ourselves, yet we *can do all things by Christ that strengthens us*.

Our religion doth farther declare, that God is not only reconcileable, but desirous to be our friend, making overtures of grace to us, and offering a full pardon for all crimes we have committed. It assures us, that if we are careful to amend, God will not be *extreme to mark what is done amiss*; that by our infirmity we often fall, yet by our repentance we may rise again; that our endeavours to please God, though imperfect and defective, yet if serious and sincere, will be accepted by him. This is the tenor of that great covenant between heaven and earth, which the Son of God procured by his intercession, purchased by his wonderful patience and meritorious obedience, ratified and sealed by his blood, published to mankind, and confirmed the truth thereof by many wonderful miracles. Thus is our

religion an inestimable benefit, and unspeakable comfort to all who sincerely embrace and firmly adhere to it; because it gives ease to their conscience, and encourages them in the practice of their duty.

The last advantage I shall mention, peculiar to the Christian doctrine, is the style and manner of its speech, which is properly accommodated to the capacity of all persons, and worthy the majesty and sincerity of divine truth. It expresseth itself plainly and simply, without any affectation or artifice, ostentation of wit or eloquence. It speaks with an imperious awful confidence, in the strain of a king; its words carrying with them authority and power divine, commanding attention, assent, and obedience: as this you are to believe, this you are to do, on pain of our high displeasure, and at your utmost peril; for even your life and salvation depend thereon. Such is the style and tenor of the scripture, such as plainly becomes the sovereign Lord of all to use, when he is pleased to proclaim his mind and will to us his creatures.

As God is in himself invisible, and that we could not bear the lustre and glory of his immediate presence, if ever he would convincingly signify his will and pleasure to us, it must be by effects of his incommunicable power, by works extraordinary and supernatural; and innumerable such hath God afforded in favour and countenance of our religion: as his clearly predicting the future revelation of his doctrine, by express voices and manifest apparitions from heaven; by frequently suspending the course of natural causes; by remarkable instances of providence; by internal attestations on the minds and consciences of men; by such wonderful means doth God demonstrate that the Christian religion came from him; an advantage peculiar to it, and such as no other institution, except that of the Jews, which was a prelude to it, could ever reasonably pretend to. I hope these considerations will be sufficient to vindicate our religion from all aspersions cast on it, by inconsiderate, vain, and dissolute persons, as also to confirm us in the esteem and excite us to the practice thereof.

And if men of wit would lay aside

their prejudices, reason would compel them to confess, that the heavenly doctrines and laws of Christ, established by innumerable miracles; his completely holy and pure life, his meekness, charity, and entire submission to the will of God, in his death, and his wondrous resurrection from the state of the dead, are most unquestionable evidences of the divinity of his person, of the truth of his gospel, and of the obligation that lies upon us, thankfully to accept him for our redeemer and saviour, on the gracious terms he has proposed. To love God with all our souls, who is the maker of our beings, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, who bear his image; as they are the sum and substance of the Christian religion, so are they duties fitted to our nature, and most agreeable to our reason. And therefore as the obtaining the love, favour, and kindness of God, should be the chief and ruling principle in our hearts, the first thing in our consideration, as what ought to govern all the purposes and actions of our lives; so we cannot possibly have more powerful motives to goodness, righteousness, justice, equity, meekness, humility, temperance, and chastity, or greater dissuatives and discouragement from all kinds of sin, than what the holy scriptures afford us. If we will fear and reverence God, love our enemies who despitefully use us, and do good in all our capacities, we are promised that our reward shall be very great; that we shall be the children of the Most High, that we shall be inhabitants of the everlasting kingdom of heaven, where there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, of life and glory.

To conclude: let us strive to walk worthy of our holy profession and high calling in Christ Jesus, and answer the great ends of his incarnation, and dwelling among us. Let us diligently imitate the virtues of his life, and abhor the committing those sins, for the expiation of which he submitted to a bloody and ignominious death. Let the consideration of his resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven, strengthen our faith and hope of immortality, mortify and destroy in us all evil concupiscence and fleshly lusts, and raise our affections to things above, that in God's fit time

we may inherit everlasting life. May the God of patience enable us to resist the most alluring temptations, and quietly bear the greatest afflictions, rather than wound our consciences, and make shipwreck of the faith. May the God of consolation give us will and strength to endure all labours and weariness in running to the end of our Christian race, that having preserved our innocence and purity through the stage of our lives, at Christ's second coming we may obtain everlasting bliss and glory; which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON XXXVIII.

By BISHOP HOPKINS.

The First Commandment.

Exod. xx. 1, 2, 3.

God spake these words, and said, I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other Gods but me.

THERE are two things in general that perfects a Christian, the one a clear and distinct knowledge of his duty; the other a conscientious practice of it; and both these are equally necessary. For as we can have no solid well grounded hopes of eternal salvation without obedience, so we can have no sure, certain rule of duty without knowledge. It hath therefore pleased God, who is the great governor, and will be the righteous judge of all the world, to prescribe us laws for the regulating of our actions, that we might be informed what we ought to do, and what to avoid. And that we may not be ignorant of those laws, he hath openly declared them in his word. For when mankind had miserably defaced the law of nature, originally written in their hearts, it seemed good to God's infinite wisdom and mercy, to transcribe and copy out that law in the second table of the Scriptures.

The Bible is the statute book of God's kingdom; therein is comprised the whole body of the heavenly laws the perfect rules of an holy life, and the sure promises of a glorious one. And the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, is a summary or brief epitome of those laws,

written by the immediate finger of God, and contracted into a short abridgment, both to ease our memories and gain our veneration. And if we consider how few the expressions are, and yet regard the copiousness and variety of the matters contained in them, we must acknowledge not only their authority to be divine, but also the wisdom of their great author, in reducing the whole duty of man, to so brief a compendium. The words are but few, therefore called the ten words; but the matter contained in them, is vast and infinite, and the rest of the Scripture, for the chief part is but a commentary upon them; either exhorting us to obedience by arguments, alluring us to it by promises, terrifying us from transgressing by threats, or exciting us to the one, and restraining us from the other, by examples recorded in the historical parts.

The time when the Commandments were delivered was about 2460 years after the creation of the world; the manner of its delivery was very terrible and astonishing: the wisdom of God designing it so, on purpose to possess the people with the greater reverence of it, and to revive in their minds a due respect to those old despised dictates of their natures, by their seeing the same laws invigorated with so much dread and terror. For the Decalogue is not so much the enacting of new laws, as reviving the old by a more solemn proclamation.

The manner in which God appeared to pronounce his laws, was very terrible; for thunder and lightning, earthquakes, fire, and darkness, were the prologue and introduction to it; and so dreadful was it, as to make not only the people to remove and stand afar off, but even so affrighted Moses himself, the messenger of God, as that he did *exceedingly fear and quake*. And this dreadful appearance of God in delivering the law, was no doubt intended to affect them with a reverent esteem of those commands, and to put them and us in mind, that if he was thus terrible only in delivering the law, he will appear much more so; when shall come to judge us for transgressing it.

But some will say, is not the law abrogated by the coming of Christ? doth not the Scripture frequently testify that

we are not now under the law, but under grace, Christ being made under the law to free those who were under the law? To which I answer, so far from its being abolished by the coming of Christ; that he himself expressly tell us, *he came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law*.

It should be observed, that the laws which God delivered by Moses, were of three sorts, the ceremonial, judicial, and moral law. The ceremonial law concerned those observances of sacrifices and offerings, purifications and cleansings, which were typical of Christ, and that sacrifice of his, which alone was able to take away sin. The judicial law consisted of those constitutions which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government; for their state was a theocracy, that is, the laws for their religion and civil government were both divine, being immediately from God; so that their judicial law was given them to be the standing law of their nation, by which all actions and suits were to be tried and determined. The moral law is a system or a body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so consonant to the light of reason, and the dictates of every man's conscience, that as soon as ever they are declared and understood, we must subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them. These are the three sorts of laws, which commonly go under the name of the law of Moses; all of which had respect either to those things which prefigured the Messiah to come, or to those which concerned their political and civil government, or to those natural virtues and duties of piety to God, and righteousness to men, that were common to them with the rest of mankind.

As for the ceremonial law, we Christians say, it is abrogated and repealed even unto the Jews themselves. For this law was given to be only a faint representation of Christ. Indeed, the Jews saw some glimmering light of him in their ceremonies and observances; but now the Gospel appears, and that light which before was but blooming, is fully spread; those dimmer lights are quite extinguished thereby, and an utter end is put to all those rites and ceremonies, which intimated and supplied the want of the sub-

stance: so that to maintain now a necessity of legal sacrifices, purifying and sprinklings, is no less than to evacuate the death of Christ, and deny the shedding of that blood, which alone can purify us from all pollutions. It is the abrogation and disannulling of this ceremonial law, that the Apostle Paul so often mentions in his Epistles. As to us, the posterity and descendants of the Gentiles, the ceremonial law was never in force, being national to the Jews only, and peculiar to them; nor indeed is the judicial law in force to us, it not extending, nor never was intended to oblige us. However, the judicial law is not abrogated to the Jews, for though now in their dispersed state, the law ceases to be in force, because they are not a body politic; yet were they to be collected into a republic, most probably the same national laws would again bind them, as in former times.

As to the moral law, of which I am now treating, that is abrogated in part, as to some of its circumstances, but not as to any thing of its substance, authority, and obligation. The moral law is abrogated to Christians as it was a covenant of works, for God in man's first creation wrote this law in his heart, and added this sanction unto it, *if thou dost this, thou shalt live; if not, thou shalt die the death*. Now all mankind by the fall of Adam, contracting an utter impotency of obeying this law, that we might not all perish according to the rigorous sentence of it, God was graciously pleased to enter into another covenant with us, promising a Saviour to repair our lapsed condition, and eternal life upon the easier terms of faith and evangelical obedience. The moral law is also abrogated to Christians as to its condemning power, for though it sentenceth every sinner to death, and curseth every one who continueth not in all things that are written therein, to do them; yet through the intervention of Christ's satisfaction and obedience, our sins are graciously pardoned, the venom and malignity of the curse abolished by Christ, *who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*: and therefore we may triumphantly exult with the Apostle, *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ*

Jesus. So that Christians are indeed freed from the moral law, as it hath the obligation of a covenant, and a power of condemnation. But then it remains still in its full vigour and authority, considered as a standing rule for our obedience; it still directs what we ought to do, binds the conscience to the performance of it, brings guilt upon the soul if we transgress it, and reduceth us to the necessity either of bitter repentance, or eternal condemnation; in this sense, *heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle shall pass from the law*. As then the moral law is no other than the law of nature written upon men's hearts, at the first; (some positive ones being only superadded;) for the same reason as we are men, we owe obedience to its dictates. And indeed, we find every part of this law enforced in the gospel, and charged upon us with the same threatnings, recommended to us by the same promises, and all interpreted by our Saviour himself, to the greatest advantage of strictness and severity. We find the same rules for our actions, the same duties required, and sins forbidden, in the gospel as in the law; only in the gospel there are mitigations, which were not in the covenant of works; namely, that God, through Christ, will accept of our repentance and sincere endeavours to amend our lives, instead of that perfect obedience and spotless purity which he required under the law.

Before I particularly treat of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, I think it necessary to give some general rules, for the right understanding and expounding them, which will be very useful for our better apprehending their full latitude and extent. The Psalmist tells us, that the commandments of God are exceeding broad, i. e. they are exceeding strait, as to any indulgence allowed to the unruly lusts and appetites of men; but exceeding broad, in comprehensiveness of their injunctions, extending their authority over all the actions of our lives. These following rules are therefore necessary for us to observe concerning the Ten Commandments. As there is no duty required, nor sin forbidden by God, but it falls under one or more of these ten words; so to the right and genuine interpretation of this law, we must take in whatsoever the

Prophets, Apostles, or Christ himself hath delivered as comments or expositions thereon. For the Decalogue is a compendium of all that they have taught concerning moral worship and justice: Nay, our Saviour doth epitomize this very epitome itself, and reduceth those ten words into two, love to God, which comprehends all the duties of the first table; and love to our neighbour, which comprizes all the duties of the second; and tells us, that upon these two hang all the laws and the prophets. And indeed, a due love of God, and of our neighbour, will make us careful to perform all the duties of religion to the one and of justice to the other; and keep us from attempting any violation to God's honour, or violence to our neighbour's right. And therefore the Apostle assures us, that love is the fulfilling of the law; and that the end of the commandment is charity of love; that is, the end, completion, or consummation of the commandment, is love to God and to one another. And since most of the commandments are delivered in negative or prohibiting terms, and only the fourth and fifth in affirmative ones; we ought to observe this rule, that the affirmative commands include in them a prohibition of the contrary sin; and the negative commands include an injunction of the contrary duty: and also the contrary to what is commanded, is always implied to be forbidden. For instance, God, in the third commandment, forbids the taking his name in vain; therefore by consequence, the hallowing and sanctifying his name is therein commanded. The fourth requires the sanctifying of the sabbath-day; therefore it follows, that the profanation of it, is thereby prohibited. The fifth, commands us to honour our parents; therefore it forbids us to be disobedient or injurious to them.

Observe also, that the same precept, which forbids the external and outward acts of sin, forbids likewise the inward desires and motions of sin in the heart; and the same precepts which require the external acts of duty, do also require such holy affections of the soul as are suitable thereto. For instance; the same command that requires us to worship God, exacts from us not only the outward ser-

vice of the body, but much more—the inward reverence and affection of our souls. That we should prostrate not only our body but our very heart at his feet; fearing him as the mighty God, loving him as the greatest good, as our only joy and happiness. So likewise that positive command, honour thy father and mother, demands from us not only the external acts of obedience to all the lawful commands of our parents and magistrates, and those whom God hath set in authority over us; but also an inward love, veneration, and esteem, for them in our hearts. And then, as for negative commands, they not only forbid the external acts of sin, but the inward motions of lust, sinful desires, and evil concupiscence. And thus we find it at large in our Saviour's excellent sermon on the mount; a great part of which is to clear and vindicate the moral law from the corrupt glosses and interpretations of the scribes and pharisees; and to shew that the authority of the law extended, not only to prohibit sinful actions, but sinful affections also. They thought it no crime to have their hearts burn with wrath, malice, and revenge, so long as they concealed it there, and did not suffer it to break forth into murder. But our Saviour assures us, that not only the sin of murder is forbidden by the law, but all the incentives to, and degrees of it, whether conceived in the heart, or expressed in words. And the same as to lustful thoughts and affections, *ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.* From these few instances, and many more which might be produced, it appears that the same precept which forbids the outward acts of sin, does also prohibit the inward motions of these in the heart; and indeed there is a great deal of reason for it: for God, who is our lawgiver, is a spirit, and there is not the least thought in our mind, nor the least shadow of an imagination raised in our fancy, nor the most silent breathing of a desire in our heart, but God is privy to it; for he knows our thoughts, as the Psalmist says, afar off; he discerns our souls more clearly and distinctly than we can behold

each other's faces; and therefore, it is but fit and reasonable, that his laws should reach as far as his knowledge.

Another rule for understanding the Decalogue is, to observe the commands of the second table for the sake of the first. Those duties, which immediately respect the service and worship of God, are contained in the first table; those which concern our demeanour to men, in the second. The worship and service of God is not to be performed out of respect to men; but our duty to men is to be observed in regard to God. The first table commands us not to worship idols, not to swear, not to prophane the sabbath. But if we abstain from these sins, because they will expose us to shame, or suffering among men; if we only worship God, that men may respect and venerate us, all the pomp and ostentation of our religion is but hypocrisy. For God expects to be served, not for man's sake, but for his own. The second table prescribes the right ordering of our conversation towards men; that we should be dutiful and obedient to our superiors; loving and kind to our equals; charitable and beneficial to our inferiors; just and righteous towards all. The duties are not to be done only for man's sake, but for God's; and those who perform them without respecting God in them, will lose their reward and acceptance.

The preface to the Ten Commandments carries an equal respect and reverence to them all, and contains a strong argument to enforce obedience to every one. It is usual with kings and princes on earth, to prefix their names and titles to those laws and edicts which they publish, in order to gain the more attention and greater veneration to them. And the great God, who is King of kings, when he proclaimed a law to his people Israel, that he might affect them with the deeper reverence of his authority, and make them the more afraid to transgress the laws, enacted by so mighty and glorious a majesty: He thus displays his name and stile before them; *I am the Lord thy God*; that they might learn to fear his glorious name. As all arguments the most prevalent and cogent, are adapted to work upon one of these two passions, our fear or love; so here, God hath accommo-

dated himself to our temper, and proclaims his authority to beget fear; *I am the Lord thy God*: His goodness and mercy to engage love; *that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. And what motives can have so strong an influence on our natures, and so readily engage us to obedience, as love and fear? What motives can be urged more enforcing than these, which are drawn both from power and goodness? The one obliging us to subjection, the other to gratitude.

He is the Lord God, the great creator, only proprietor, absolute governor and disposer of all things; and therefore we owe a reverential and awful observance to all his laws and injunctions. It is but just and reasonable, that we should be subject unto him that created us, and who, if we rebel against him, hath infinite power eternally to destroy us. He is the Lord God, whose kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting; whose dominions have no bounds, either of time or place. His voice shakes the heavens, and removes the earth out of its place. His way is in the whirlwind; storms and tempests are his harbingers. The clouds are the dust raised by his feet; the mountains quake at his presence; the hills melt away at his displeasure; the world and all the inhabitants of it shall be dissolved. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; and therefore who would not fear thee, O king of nations, tremble and be astonished when once thou art angry? Shall we then, who are vile and wretched sinners, despise the authority and majesty of the great God, before whom all the powers of heaven and earth lie prostrate? Dare we infringe his laws, and violate his commands, who is so great and terrible a God, that he can destroy us with the very breath of his nostrils? Are we able to contend with this God, are we equal to the Almighty? Who among us can dwell with devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Did we frequently affect our hearts with a serious consideration of the dread majesty and supreme authority of the great God, we should not presumptuously provoke him. Fear is a most excellent preservative against sin; a strong fence which God hath set

about his law, to keep us from breaking the bounds that he hath prescribed; and therefore, we are advised to fear God and keep his commandments; to stand in awe and sin not.

As the authority of God is here set forth to move us to obedience by working upon our fear; so his goodness and mercies are declared to us, in order to engage us thereto, from a principle of love and gratitude. *The Lord thy God, who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* This, though it be a soft, yet is a most powerful and effectual argument. For hath God surrounded us with blessings, and loaded us every day with his benefits? Have we received our life, our being from him, and so many comforts in which he allows us to take delight? Have we been delivered by his watchful providence from many deaths and dangers, restored from sickness, or preserved in health? Doth he feed us at his table, clothe us out of his wardrobe, and, what is infinitely more, hath he sent his only Son, to lay down his life, and shed his most precious blood for us? Hath he revealed to us his gospel, and therein given us the promise of eternal glory; a glory which hope was not bold enough to expect, nor imagination large enough to conceive? Hath he sent his Spirit to seal and ratify his promises, and crowned us with many rich blessings here, and will reward us with joy and happiness hereafter? I say, hath he done all these wonderful things for us, and can we be so unkind and disingenuous as to deny any thing to that God, who hath bestowed on us such inestimable favours and benefits? Can we despise his precepts, who is ever willing to reward our prayers? Will not we hear him speaking unto us, who hath so often heard, helped, and saved us, when we have cried unto him? Shall we not carefully obey his laws, since he requirith obedience from us, as the evidence and expression of our love to him?—*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he is that loveth me.* And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to *fear the Lord thy God, and to love him, and to keep his commandments, which I command thee this day for thy good?* God might have required from us the

very same obedience he now doth, without promising any reward for it. We owe him all that we possibly can do, as the author of our being; and every power and faculty of our souls ought to be employed for him, who gave them to us. Thus we see how God hath enforced the observation of his laws upon us, both by his authority and his mercy; the one to work on our fear, the other on our love, and both to engage us to obedience.

I proceed to consider the precepts themselves, whereof the first and chiefest is, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but me*; which requires, That we have a God and worship him: That we have the true God for our God: That we have no other beside him.

It would be tedious and endless to insist particularly on all the duties included in the true and sincere worship of God. I shall therefore speak only of the three most remarkable ones which are, to love God, to fear and praise him. In this command is required the most supreme love of God; the love of him, being not only the sum of this, but all the commands of the first table; therefore our Saviour, when he gave an abridgment of the law, comprized all the ten under two great commands, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*; this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* From whence the Apostle infers, that love is the fulfilling of the law. We should have a great and earnest desire after God, *our souls shall pant after him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, and even thirst for the living God.* Again, this command requires us to fear God; and certainly we cannot have the Lord for our God, unless we fear and reverence him: for as the love, so the fear of God, is the sum of all the commandments, and indeed the substance of all religion; and generally the character of a true worshipper and obedient servant of God is, that he is a man fearing God. If we acknowledge there is a God, it is but reasonable that we should fear his essential greatness and glory. For take away the fear of a deity, and a supreme power that can reward and punish the actions of men, and there

is a flood-gate opened for all villainy and wickedness.

Another principal part of worship required in this first precept is, the invocation of the name of God in our prayers and praises. Love and fear respect the inward worship of God in our hearts, but this appertains to his outward worship, and by it we give express testimonies that we love and fear him. Prayer and praises are the tribute and homage of religion; by the one we acknowledge our dependance upon God; by the other we confess that all our blessings and comforts are from him. Such then, as neither pray unto God nor praise him, cannot be said to have a God, for they acknowledge none, but are Gods unto themselves. and as the love and fear of God are often used in scripture for his whole worship and service, so is this invocation of his name, *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name*; that is, those who do not worship or serve him. And, as this first command requires, in the general, that the true God should be truly worshipped; so the three next following commands, prescribe the means and branches of his worship, and how he would have it performed. The second commandment requires us to worship God who is a spirit, without any visible image or representation of the deity. For as it is impossible there should be any true resemblance made of a spirit, so it is most impious to give any part of divine honour and reverence unto dumb idols. The third commandment requires, that we should never mention the name of the great God slightly and impertinently, but with the utmost veneration and serious affection. The fourth prescribes us the time which God hath set apart and sanctified for his solemn worship; so that each command of the first table is relative to divine worship, but the first is the foundation of the other three. This brings me to shew, that

We are to have the true God for our God. The ground-work of all religion, and the foundation of all our hopes, consist in owning and believing the true God: He of whom Moses affirms, that he made heaven and earth. He who made a covenant with Abraham, and miraculously

delivered the Israelites out of the house of bondage, is here made the object of our adoration: He it is that is to have our prayers and praises, and all divine honours; in a word, it is he that must be loved, feared, and trusted above all things. Nor should we have any other God beside him; meaning that we should make the true God, or the God of Israel, the sole object of divine worship, and give no divine honours to any else; and which is, in effect, the same with our Saviour's precept, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*. This was indeed the principal thing intended in this commandment; for the Israelites were too prone to forget God, to fall into idolatry, and worship the gods of the Egyptians. And therefore, to prevent this, the first commandment begins with this strict precept, *thou shalt have no other Gods before me*.—Thus much for the duties required in the first commandment: I now proceed to observe what is forbidden. And, in general,

Atheism, or the disbelief of a God, is prohibited and condemned by this command. For if there be no God, what difference is there whether we pray or blaspheme; whether we lead holy and pious the reins to manner of lewdness and riot; to all impure delights that vice and sensuality can recommend to our corrupt appetites? For if there be no God, there can be no rewards nor punishments: and therefore it will be necessary to shew the folly and unreasonableness of atheism, and to convince men there is a God, without which all religion and worship is but folly and madness. I shall therefore briefly confirm this great and primary truth, by such convincing and demonstrative arguments as the subject will permit

The universal consent of all nations strongly proves the being of a deity. And what all agree in must needs be accounted a dictate of nature, a maxim of truth. Though mankind have strangely differed about other things, concerning their laws, government, customs, and manner of worshipping God, yet all agree in the belief of a deity. Never was there any nation so wild and barbarous that did not acknowledge a God; their great fault and folly was to acknowledge too many. How

could the world be so easily drawn into such several shapes and forms of religion, as among the Heathen were almost infinite, and among others too various and different, was there not a natural inclination in the souls of men, to embrace some religion or other, and an indelible character of a deity imprinted on their minds. Insomuch, that in the times of darkness, rather than be without a deity, some would dig gods out of their gardens, and consecrate dogs and serpents. Some few indeed may have been found, who have not believed a deity; but there is no reason from thence to conclude it no dictate of nature; for how many are there that violate the laws of nature, and do those things which the innate light and reason of a man abhor and abominate? Yet none will from thence infer, that there are no such things as natural laws. So neither though some may have razed out of their minds any notion of God, yet it does not follow that the belief of a supreme being is not an impression of nature. Another demonstration of the existence of a deity is the frame and order of the universe, in which there are as many wonders as creatures. Let us cast but our eyes upwards, and contemplate the vast expansion of the heavens, which are the canopy of the world, the roof of this great house the universe. How gloriously is this canopy studded! How many glittering lights appear to illuminate our inferior world, to discover to our eyes all visible objects, and to our minds the invisible God! Who hath gilded the rays of the sun, or silvered the face of the moon? Who hath marshalled the mighty host of heaven, and set the stars in such array, that not one of them breaks its rank, nor strays from its order? Whose hand is it that turns the great wheels of heaven, and makes them spin out days, months and years, time and life unto us? Who hath ordered the vicissitudes of day and night, summer and winter, that these run not into one another, and blind the world in confusion; but with a perpetual variety observe their just seasons and interchanges? Do not all these wonderful works proclaim aloud, that certainly there is a great and glorious God, who sits enthroned on high, who hath thus paved the bottom of heaven with stars, and

adorned the inner parts of it with glories yet to us unknown? Let us descend lower through the vast ocean of liquid air. How comes it to pass, and whose wisdom and providence did so order, that there should not fall whole clouds of rain, but only drops and showers? An effect so wonderful, that scarce any other work of nature is more frequently in scripture ascribed unto God, as a demonstration of his power and goodness, than that he sendeth rain upon the earth. And let the atheist tell, how it comes to pass, that the same cloud should be both a fountain of water, and yet a furnace of fire. This the prophet particularly ascribes to the Almighty God; he maketh lightnings with the rain. If we descend into the lowest story of this great building the earth; what a variety of wonder shall we there find? That the whole mass and globe of it should hang pendulous in the air, without any thing to support it: that this great and ponderous body should be fixed for ever in its place; having no foundation to support it, but that air which every mote and fly doth easily cut through: that this round ball of earth should be inhabited on every part: these, and many other things, are such unaccountable mysteries to our comprehension, and yet by experience known to be true, that he must be an atheist out of mere obstinacy, who seriously considers them, and does not adore the infinite power and wisdom of their author.

But what makes some proud spirits backward to acknowledge God in the works of nature is, that they think by their reason to give a plausible account of those effects and phenomena which we see in the world, by deducing them from second and natural causes. Hence some have thought, that reason and philosophy are great enemies to religion, and patrons of atheism; but in truth, the atheist hath not a more smart and keen adversary than true reason and profound philosophy. I dare challenge the most learned men in the world, to give a satisfactory account of the most vulgar and common appearances in nature, without resolving them at last into the will and disposal of the God of nature. If I should ask them what makes the grass green, a stone to fall downwards, the fire to aspire upwards, or

the sun to enlighten and warm the earth ; what answers can they give, but that it is the property of their natures ? If I farther enquire how their natures came to be distinguished with such properties, they must either be silent, or confess a first cause, which endowed their natures with such properties and actions : so that all must at last be resolved into, and terminate in God. And,

Unless the being of a God be presupposed, there can no tolerable account be given of the being of any thing. We see innumerable different beings in the world ; and what rational account can the atheist give how they came into being ? Why, says Epicurus, the world had once a beginning, but it was by chance ; and Aristotle, that the world is from eternity, and never had any beginning. --- In answer to the first, I say with Cicero, that they will as soon persuade me, that an innumerable parcel of loose and disordered letters, being often shaken together, and afterwards thrown out upon the ground, shall fall into such an exquisite order, as to frame a most ingenious heroic poem ; as that atoms straying to and fro at random, should casually meet to make a world consisting of heaven and air, sea and earth, and so many sorts and species of living creatures ; in the frame and composition of which we see such wonderful and inimitable skill. — And if those atoms could thus fortuitously frame a world, why had not they built houses and cities, and woven us garments, that so, by very good chance, we might have found these necessities ready provided to our hands, and saved us the trouble and labour of making them ? Again, if we look on the most contemptible worm that crawls, we shall find it a far more excellent piece of mechanism, a far more curious engine, than any the art or wit of man could frame ; and shall chance to make these ?

As to the eternity of the world, it is very unreasonable that such should deny a God, who yet grant the very thing for which alone they deny him. The reason that tempts atheists to deny a deity is, because they cannot conceive a being infinite and eternal ; and yet, by owning the world to be so, they run into the very inconveniency they would be thought to avoid ; and instead of acknowledging

one eternal being, confess there are innumerable. But if the world be eternal, there must of necessity have been past an infinite succession of ages ; and, which is as difficult for us to conceive as an infinite being that should create the world. I could give many more demonstrations to evince, that there is such a supreme and infinite being as a deity, but these are sufficient to convince any atheist, who will be swayed by that reason which he so much desires and adores, that there is a God.

What then remains, but that having proved the folly and unreasonableness of speculative atheism, we proceed to condemn the impiety of practical atheism ; the profaneness and irreligion of those who live as without God in the world ; as if there was no God or devil, no heaven nor hell, no future state of rewards and punishments : indeed, in this sense every wicked man is an atheist, and such as the Apostle describes, *they profess that they know God ; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate*. Did they really and cordially believe, that there is a just and holy God, who takes notice of all their actions ; a great and terrible Majesty, who will call them to a strict account for all their thoughts, all their discourses, and all their works ; an Almighty God, who hath prepared wrath and vengeance to inflict on all those who despise his authority and transgress his laws : I say, did they sincerely believe this, would they dare to profane his glorious and reverend name, by impertinently using it in their trifling discourses ? or rend and tear it by oaths and blasphemies, hellish execrations and curses ? Did they believe the horrors and torments, the stench and darkness, the woe and anguish of the damned in hell, which are as far from being utterable, as they are from being tolerable ? Did they certainly believe these things, surely they would not still presume to venture on treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. And, was this really believed, swearing, lying, and stealing, drunkenness and uncleanness, would not so generally reign among us, as now they do. Indeed, we persuade ourselves that we do believe these things ; we profess that

there is a God infinitely holy and just; that he will recompense tribulation, anguish, and wrath upon every soul of man that doth evil; but, alas! this is only a verbal belief, contradicted and disowned by a practical atheism. The little influence that the belief of a just God hath upon us, to regulate our actions, and engage us to walk in an holy awe and dread of his divine majesty, clearly evinceth that we may indeed fancy these things, but do not believe them. For did we seriously and heartily believe, that there is a great and jealous God, who hath said, *vengeance is mine, I will repay it*, what is there in the world, that could persuade us to offend him?

Possibly there are some, who though they believe there is a God, yet are not fully persuaded that he is so holy, nor so just, as his word declares him to be; not so holy in hating our sins, nor so just in punishing them. But this is only to hope in his mercy; in defiance of his truth. He hath sworn that he will take vengeance on all impertinent wretches, and destroy such as wilfully go on in their sins; and God will be true to his threatenings as well as his promises. Indeed if we believe there is a God, and yet think he will spare us, though we go on presumptuously to add iniquity unto sin, we are far worse than any atheist. It is better, to have no opinion of God at all, than such an one as is unworthy of him. Even Plutarch an heathen could say, "it was far less injurious to him, if any should deny there was such a man as Plutarch, than to say that such an one indeed there was, but that he was faithless, inconstant, cruel, or revengeful." Nor is it so heinous an affront against the divine majesty, to deny there is any such supreme being; as to acknowledge there is indeed a God, but that he is not infinitely holy in hating our sins, infinitely true to his threatenings, nor infinitely just in punishing men's impinency and disobedience. This is a degree of impiety worse than atheism, and yet all wicked ungodly sinners are guilty thereof. Know then, O sinner, and tremble, that there is a God who sees and observes all thy actions, who writes them down in the book of his remembrance, and will call thee to a strict account for them, and

judge thee out of thy own mouth. But if we believe there is a God, why do we not fear and serve him? If we believe there is an heaven, and hell, and an eternity to come, why do we not live answerably to this belief? Let us either blot it out of our creed, and declare we do not believe in God the Father Almighty, or else live as those should do, who acknowledge so great and terrible, so pure and holy a God. For a speculative atheist to be profane and wicked, is but consonant to his principles; for why should not he gratify all his lusts and sensual desires, whose only hope is in this life, and who thinks not to be accountable for any thing hereafter? but for such as acknowledge a deity, to live as without God in the world, to break his laws, slight his promises, and despise his threatenings, is the greatest and most desperate madness in the world. If therefore we know, and believe in God, let us glorify him as God, paying all holy obedience to his laws, and humble submission to his will; conforming ourselves to his purity, depending upon his power and providence, trusting in his infinite mercy and goodness, until we at last arrive to that state of perfect bliss and felicity, when we shall fully know the ineffable mystery of the deity, see him that is now invisible, and live there as much by sense and sight, as here we do by faith and expectation. Thus much for the first commandment.

SERMON XXXIX.

By Dr. HOLE.

The Second Commandment.

Exod. xx. 4, 5, 6.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness, &c.

ALMIGHTY God having in the first commandment settled the true object of divine worship, and confined it wholly to himself, in opposition to all manner of idols or false gods; he proceeds in this second commandment to direct us in the right way of performing it; which is not done by any images or visible representations of him, but in a spiritual manner, suited

to his nature and will. This is the true design of these words, *thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image*. This commandment being negative, I shall first consider what is therein forbidden, and then what is commanded. The things forbidden are the *making and worshipping of any graven image*. Not that all making of images, pictures, or representations of any creature is hereby prohibited; or that the trade of a painter, carver, or engraver, are unlawful; for we find some images made and appointed by the order of God himself, as the cherubims, the brazen serpent, and the like; and Moses ascribes the skill of *Aholiab and Bezuleel, in working the work of an engraver, to the holy spirit of God*. So that all images or representations of things are not here absolutely forbidden, for that would condemn all pictures, or likeness of any thing, and render our very coin unlawful. But the images here forbidden to be made, are images of God, or representations of the divine nature; which being spiritual and immaterial, may not be represented by any bodily shape, for God being infinite and incomprehensible, cannot be represented by any image, without debasing and disparaging him: and therefore the prophet enquires, *to whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?* And the Apostle bids us, *not to think the God-head to be like unto gold and silver, or stone graven by the art and intention of man*; and much less, *to change the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, to birds, or four-footed beasts, or creeping things*.

There is such a vast disproportion between an image, and the divine nature, that we cannot liken one to the other without affronting and dishonouring God. An image can only be made of corporeal things; and for such as are finite and corruptible, to make an image of God, is to bring down that infinite being to the dimensions of a finite creature; and in effect to deny the spirituality and incorruptibility of his nature. And therefore we find a very strict charge given to the Israelites, against image-making: *take good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no image in the day when the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of*

the fire; that you corrupt not yourselves, and make you a graven image. And in this commandment, we have an express prohibition of making any likeness or similitude of God, by any thing either in heaven above, as by the sun, moon, and stars; or in the earth beneath, as by the fowls of the air, the four-footed beasts, or creeping things; or in the water under the earth, by the fish, or any thing in the sea; no, nor yet by the likeness of man, the lord of all these. For though God made man in his own image, yet man is not to make God in his; by reason of the infinite distance and disproportion there is between them. And when God is described in scripture with eyes, hands, and arms, and the like, yet this is done merely in compliance with our infirmities, and is spoken after the manner of men, and to be understood in a way becoming the divine majesty: but cannot justify the making any image of him, or the picturing him in any human shape, which is to prostitute our maker, and to think him such as ourselves. This is to confine omnipresence to a place, circumscribe immensity, and degrade the deity to the properties and infirmities of human nature. We may not then represent God in a bodily shape, or form false apprehensions of him in our mind, by making him like ourselves; much less are we permitted to worship any image or representation of God: *thou shalt not bow down to it, or worship it*.

In which words there is a two-fold worship implied; the one external, in the outward reverence, and bowing the body; the other internal, consisting in the inward worship and reverence of the mind. And we are here forbidden to give any bodily worship to images, by bowing or falling down to them. The Israelites were strictly charged, *not to serve other Gods, or bow themselves unto them*. And such were sharply reprov'd, who bowed the knee to Baal, or fell down before any idol. The idolatry of the heathens is frequently set forth by prostrations, bowings, and other visible acts of bodily reverence, used to their false deities; which being tokens of the inward devotion of their minds towards them, were invasions of God's prerogative, and therefore strictly forbidden. But the internal worship and reverence of the heart,

is here chiefly forbidden to be given to images; for this is to make them gods, and to give the glory due to God only, to the works of men's hands, which is idolatry to be abhorred by all Christians. And not only the worshipping of images, but of God by them, is here prohibited. The worshipping of false gods, is the idolatry condemned in the first commandment. The worshipping the true God in a false way, is the idolatry forbidden in this. The ruder and more barbarous nations that mistook the object of worship, and paid it to stocks and stones, were guilty of the former; some of the wiser and more knowing among the heathen, who when *they knew God, yet glorified him not as God*, were guilty of the latter. These two are in scripture stiled idolaters; as we read in the first chapter to the Romans, where these wiser heathens are charged with it, because though they knew God, by the creation of the world, yet they worshipped him in a way unsuitable to his nature, namely, by images and corporeal resemblances of him, *changing his glory into the similitude of men, beasts, and birds*. And though they did not terminate their worship in the images, but only served God by them, it being impossible for the wiser part of them to take that for a God, or maker of the world, which they either made with their own hands, or saw made with their own eyes; yet their worshipping of God this way, so unworthy of him, is in scripture called idolatry. The papists, who worship God much after the same manner, and have recourse to the same distinctions to screen themselves, ought seriously to consider this. It is most certain, that there is a peculiar and incommunicable piece of homage due to the great Creator of all things, upon the account of his infinite and adorable perfections, and our great obligations to him. This is what we call divine worship, and is challenged by God himself in the Old Testament, and confined to him, by our Saviour, in the New, in those words; *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: and though those who worship images, and other things, would excuse it, by making these things not the object of worship, but only means and helps to direct it to God

himself; yet it is to be feared, that much more goes to the image than to God. To prevent which I shall proceed in the next place, to consider the sanction by which this prohibition is enforced. And that is taken partly from God Almighty's jealousy and tenderness for his honour; *I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God*; and partly from his just indignation, and severe punishment of those who violate and invade it: *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*.

The jealousy of God ought to be a sufficient argument to deter any from offering him this kind of affront or indignity. For if the jealousy of a man is justly to be dreaded, by all who give occasion for it, because it stirs up his highest resentment, for any violation of his honour, and arms him with a more than ordinary courage to vindicate it; certainly the jealousy of God, who is tender of his honour, and so able to repair it, is much more to be dreaded by all who wilfully invade it.

That God is thus tender and jealous, impatient of any rival, and will admit of none to participate with him in the love and honour he requires from us, we learn from the prophet Isaiah; *I am the Lord, this is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images*. The jealousy here ascribed to God, must not be taken for such a vexatious, disquieting passion, as is wont to ruffle and discompose mankind, for that is inconsistent with the divine nature; but must be understood by way of accommodation and similitude to our understanding. The Hebrew word in the original signifies a strong, as well as a jealous God: importing that he is able to vindicate his honour, and will certainly punish all injuries offered to it. Jealousy of itself without strength is but an impotent and contemptible passion, but when armed with an almighty power, is justly terrible; and therefore Moses in this very precept about images, tells the Israelites, *the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, he is a jealous God*; and elsewhere brings in God, thus declaring, *they have moved me to jealousy, with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; a fire is kindled in mine*

anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. Let us then ask of all, whose hearts and affections stray from their maker, *do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, are we stronger than he?* can our heart bear up, or our hands be strong in the day that he shall visit us? no; *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* And yet that will be our case, if we forsake God, and follow idols. Which leads me to another part of the sanction of this law, taken from the justice of God, in punishing the breakers of it, in those words; *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.* To visit is sometimes taken in a good sense, for beholding another with an eye of pity and compassion; in which sense David prays, *visit me, O Lord, with thy salvation.* Sometimes in a bad sense, for looking on with an eye of fury and revenge, and visiting with judgments and calamities; which is the meaning in this place, where God threatens to punish the offenders against this law, both in their persons and posterity. And he *visits this iniquity upon the fathers themselves;* of this kind the holy scriptures afford many examples, God executing his judgments upon idolatries, and frequently punishing his own people, when they revolted from him, and set up their molten images.

He also *visits this iniquity of the fathers upon the children;* this we find verified in many of the kings of Israel and Judah, who for their idolatry were punished not only in their own persons, but in their posterity; God *recompensing the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them,* and that *to the third and fourth generation;* those being generations which a man may live to see. And as the prosperity of children is one of the greatest comforts of human life, and all parents delight to behold such flourishing branches of their own; so to see them in misery and trouble, is a melancholy heart-breaking. And therefore Almighty God, to deter men from transgressing this law, denounces vengeance against the posterity of such as break

it, threatening their children *to the third and fourth generation,* and punishing their idolatries, through the whole line they are capable of seeing. By which it appears that sinners entail a curse upon their offspring, and make the children miserable by their impieties.—But how can it consist, (some will say) with the justice and goodness of God, to punish the children for the sins of their parents? especially he having declared, that *the soul that sinneth, shall die; and the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; but the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked upon him.* Now to this the answer is easy and obvious. For God's visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, is always upon supposition of their making their fathers' sins their own; by imitating their ill examples, and treading in the steps of their impieties; for so God himself tells them, *if your children forsake my law, and walk not in my statutes, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their sins with scourges: but, if the son forsake the iniquities of his father, he shall not die, he shall surely live, saith the Lord.* God never visits the sins of the fathers upon penitent and reforming children; but if they imitate their fathers' wickedness, it is but just and righteous, that they suffer for them: in which case, they are punished not for their fathers' sins, but their own. And because idolatrous parents are too apt to corrupt their children by their own evil counsel and example, therefore Almighty God, to deter them from it, threatens to punish the fathers in their children; which he may as well do, as in their houses and estates, or any thing belonging to them: for children are part of the goods and substance of the parents, who are deeply concerned in their welfare or misery: and therefore God may justly visit them, in those dearest pledges, if they mislead them into their impieties. In which case he doth not so much make their children suffer the punishment of their fathers' sin, as the fathers suffer for their own. Almighty God may, and often doth, visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children with temporal punishments; but then though the cala-

mity be the child's, yet the punishment is properly the father's: he is wounded in one of the nearest and tenderest parts of himself, though it may work together for good to the repenting child. Indeed God never visits the father's sins upon the children with eternal punishment: in which sense every one must bear his own burden; but he justly may and doth with temporal evils, for the correction and amendment of both. But who are the persons against whom this threat is denounced? why them that hate him; that is, those who transgress his laws. For as the loving God is expressed by keeping his commandments, so the breaking them is stiled hating of him. But idolaters and the worshippers of images are more especially called haters of God. For as the adulteress shews her hatred and contempt of her husband, by giving herself to the embraces of another; so they who follow their own inventions, and give that worship to images, which is due only to God, cast off the love of God, and may be truly said to hate him. Having thus considered the negative part of this precept, which forbids the making and worshipping of images, I proceed to the affirmative, as to what is required of us; and that is to worship God, after a due manner, in a way suitable to his nature and will.

This commandment requires us to serve God suitably to his nature; not by images or corporeal resemblances, for he having no bodily parts, cannot be represented in any bodily shape, and which to attempt, is a great debasement to his infinite majesty and glory: but he being a spiritual essence must be served with spiritual worship, and so our Saviour declares, *God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and truth.* For the better understanding whereof, it should be observed, that the worshipping of God in spirit and truth, doth not exclude all bodily worship, nor yet the use of rites and ceremonies; neither of which are inconsistent with spiritual worship. To worship him then in spirit and truth, is to worship him with our spirits, and not with the tongue only; it is to draw nigh to him with our hearts, and not barely with our lips; and to serve him truly and sincerely, in opposition to all

feigned, formal, and hypocritical service. In short, to serve him suitably to his nature, is to have our affections raised towards him, in every becoming his several attributes; that is, to love him for his goodness, to fear him for his greatness, to trust on him for his faithfulness, and to honour him for all his divine and amiable perfections. Again,

To worship God rightly, is the doing it agreeable to his will, as well as suitable to his nature: we must serve him according to his own direction and appointment; for divine worship being that homage, which we as creatures owe to our great creator, it is but just that we should worship him after the manner he has commanded; which not to do, is to declaim his authority, and to be governed only by our own will. But may nothing be done in the worship of God, unless expressly commanded by him? To answer this truly, a distinction ought to be made, between the substantial parts of divine worship, and the accidental, or alterable circumstances thereof. As for the substantial part of religion, consisting of all that is necessary to be believed or done in order to salvation, that requires the express precept and revelation of God, without which nothing is to be so esteemed. For he best knows how he will be served; and having declared his mind in the holy scriptures, they ought to be the rule and standard of our duty. Since to add thereto, would be to charge it with imperfection, and to make a new religion of our own. But as for the circumstantial part of divine worship, such as time, place, gesture, and the like, these not being particularly determined by God in the holy scripture, are in a great measure left to every one's discretion in their private worship, and to the prudence and authority of superiors in the public service of the church, whom we ought to obey in such things; so as care be taken, that the rites and ceremonies enjoined, are suitable to those general rules of order, decency, and edification, prescribed by God, and becoming his service; and that they are not enjoined and observed, as essential parts of worship, or necessary to salvation, for that would be to add to the substance of religion, and to teach for doctrine the

commandments of men; but only as outward circumstances, for the order and decency of public worship, and as things that may vary, as ~~times~~ places, and other occasions may require.

The worship of God then, recommended in this command, is both internal and external. By the former is meant, the worship of our hearts and souls, whereby we inwardly admire and adore his divine excellencies; esteeming, loving, and fearing him, as our great creator and best benefactor: and this not in pretence and appearance only, but in sincerity: *not in words or in tongue, but in deed and in truth*. from the very bottom of the heart. By the latter is meant the worship of the body, or when we express the inward reverence of the mind by the outward humble gestures of the body; which God frequently calls for, and David exhorts us to in these words, *O come let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our maker*. This is what some expositors of this commandment have thought to be here principally intended; making the internal worship of the soul to be required in the first commandment, and the external worship of the body to be commanded in this. And as God forbids the bowing down, or giving any bodily worship to graven images, so he requires this and other gestures of bodily adoration to be given to himself. But because all humble gestures and acts of bodily reverence have been despised by some, and too much neglected by others, it may not be improper to recommend and enforce this external bodily worship. Let it then be considered,

That God claims this external worship as due to himself, and threatens to punish such as give it to others. He here forbids the bowing or falling down to any graven images, as an invasion of his prerogative, and declares that the prostituting of our bodies as well as souls to them, will stir up his jealousy. How sharply are the Israelites reproved for bowing the knee to Baal; and the idolatry of the heathen is frequently expressed in scripture, by their *serving other gods, and bowing down unto them*. Again, Almighty God created the body as well as the soul, and united them together for his service, and therefore he expects the homage of

both. Indeed, the service of the heart is what he principally demands and regards; *My son, give me thy heart*: that being the best offering we can make to a spiritual immaterial Being, without which all other service is but dead and ineffectual. But yet he expects the humility and adoration of the outward man; he calls for the ear, to hear instruction; for the eyes to be lifted up in prayer; for the tongue to speak the praises of our maker; in a word, he expects that our whole man should bow with the profoundest awe and reverence to him, before he will bow his ear, and be inclined to hear us; and justly too, *for it is he that made us, and not we ourselves*, and therefore all the members of our bodies ought to be employed and devoted to his service. And as our bodies as well as souls partake of the benefits of Christ's redemption, so should both be dedicated to him, and join together in his service. The apostle tells us, we are not our own, to dispose and order ourselves, as we please; but *being bought with a price, we are to glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are his*. Lastly, we hope to be glorified hereafter, in our bodies as well as souls, and therefore both ought to glory him here. Many and great things are said concerning the future felicity of our bodies, in particular, that they shall be fashioned like unto *Christ's glorious body*. And if they are to be crowned with such invaluable blessings hereafter, it is not reasonable, by engaging them in his service here, that we should prepare and fit them for the next world.

Thus we see what is required of us in this commandment; namely, to raise our minds above all gross sense and fancy in our adorations of our Maker: not framing any outward images or resemblances to worship him by; nor forming any false notions or misrepresentations of him, by thinking him such a one as ourselves: but we are here commanded to entertain high and worthy thoughts of him, conceiving of him as a Being transcendently perfect, infinitely superior to all, in goodness, justice, wisdom, and power, and as such to be loved, feared, trusted and honoured above all; and to direct all our service to him with such apprehen-

sions. This is to worship him in spirit and truth. And the body as well as the mind is to be employed in these adorations. The negative precept here, *thou shalt not bow down to a graven image*, includes the contrary positive duty, *thou shalt bow down to the Lord thy God*; meaning, that we ought to worship God with our body, as well as our mind. This commandment then as much requires us to bow down and kneel, and give bodily worship unto God, as it forbids us to give it to a graven image. And the practice of holy men in all ages hath been agreeable hereto, who have been as forward to do the one, as to refuse the other. In the Old Testament we find the people of God always using a posture of reverence in the worship of God, by standing, kneeling, or prostrating themselves. In the New Testament, we find our blessed Saviour and his disciples, in all their prayers unto God, either bowing, kneeling, or prostrating themselves before him; which is that glorifying of God with their bodies, enjoined and practised by them. Indeed, the inward reverence and devotion of the mind, will always draw after it this outward reverence of the body; and therefore the whole worship of God is represented in scripture by these external visible acts of adoration. Hence bowing and kneeling unto God is generally in scripture used to signify the worshipping him. *O come let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?* This therefore is here required to be paid unto God and no other, and that because he is a jealous God, infinitely tender of his honour, and impatient of any competitor in this incommunicable homage, belonging to him. Again, he threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the fourth generation, who thus invade and defraud him of his honour; that is, their posterity shall fare the worse for it, their children's children shall be capable of less favour, and be more strictly and severely dealt with on this account. The justice whereof has been before vindicated.

Lastly, to encourage the observance of this law, he adds, that he will *shew*

mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments. Not that he will forbear to punish the offending children of disobedient men; no, we find him declaring, *if their children forsake his law, and keep not his commandments, he will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their sin with scourges; nevertheless (saith he) my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them.* That is, he will deal more favourably with them for their parents' sake. The misdeeds of some shall not interrupt his kindness to the rest of their posterity, or blot out the memory of their goodness. This we find verified in the posterity of Abraham, and the other patriarchs, in whom Almighty God overlooked many and great provocations for their sake, mixing mercy with severity, and setting them at last in the promised land. And here we may observe the vast difference and disproportion, between the proceedings of God in the way of justice and in the way of mercy: *he visiteth the iniquities of disobedient parents, to the third and fourth generation; but, he sheweth mercy to a thousand generations*, of those who obey him. He soon forgets the wrongs done him, but keeps our good works in everlasting remembrance. Which should teach us not only to imitate him therein, but encourage us to serve and obey so good a master. And lest any should vainly expect these instances of divine goodness, without observing the commands annexed to them, the last words of the commandment confine them wholly to those, *that love God and keep his commandments.* As the revolted from God were before stiled haters of him, so they who obey his laws, are here said to love him. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, (saith our Saviour) he it is that loveth me.* And elsewhere, *if any man love me, he will keep my word.*

To conclude then, we may learn from this commandment the happiness of descending from good parents, who bequeath a blessing, and derive a mercy upon their offspring to many generations. And the unhappiness and sad misfortune of such as are born of disobedient parents, who entail misery and a curse upon their whole posterity: which

should teach us, not only for our own, but our children's sake, to be ever mindful of keeping God's laws, and very tender of breaking them.

SERMON XL.

By BISHOP BEVERIDGE.

The Third Commandment.

* EXOD. xx. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God, &c.

THE dreadful solemnity, with which the ten commandments were delivered by God to Moses from Mount Sinai, was a sight so terrible, that Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake. And the people, when they saw the fire, black darkness and tempest, and heard the thunder, the trumpet and voice of God, *they removed and stood afar off, and said to Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* Imagine, therefore, that we heard the voice of God proclaiming loud in our ears, from the midst of glorious, and yet dreadful fire, lightnings, thunder, and the sound of trumpets, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.* Had we this thought frequently in our minds, who could dare to prophane the sacred name of God, by oaths, curses, blasphemies, and dreadful execrations, on every slight and frivolous occasion, as is now the common practice?—To preserve, then, the innocent, and reclaim those who are guilty of this wicked custom, I will first consider the meaning of the words, and then make use of such reasons and arguments, as may be proper to dissuade men from it.

To take the name of God in vain, is, in the literal sense, to use the sacred name of God, lightly and commonly, to vain, idle, needless, and insignificant purposes, though we do not swear by it, or call God to witness the truth of what we say. To have that name often in our mouths, on every trifling occasion, shews that we have not an awful respect for him in our hearts. This is the beginning of evil, and generally prepares

the way to swearing. We should therefore, at first, hinder children and young persons from using familiarly and commonly the name of God. This will beget reverence to it, and restrain the abuse. They should be checked and punished when they call on God, either at their play, work, or on any occasion, but what is serious. By constantly doing this, we should stop one common inlet to this wicked practice. If we thus discharge our duty to our children and servants, it will put us in mind also of our own neglect and failings; for by reminding them not to take the name of God in vain, we shall be ashamed to be guilty of it ourselves. I fear the frequent practice of abusing the name of God, by parents, masters, and mistresses, gives occasion to children and servants to do the same; and is the reason why they dare not reprove and punish them for so offending. But sad must be the case of those, who are afraid to do their duty to their children and servants, when yet they shall be severely punished by God for not doing it. Let such consider, that though they are exceeding culpable themselves in this point, yet that they ought to reprove and punish those who are under their care for the like offences; because they will thereby do their own duty, prevent a great deal of mischief, and avoid being guilty of the sins of others. But to take the name of God, in vain, is most properly, to swear either rashly, without heed and reverence, on any just and weighty occasion; or falsely, without regard to truth, not knowing whether what we say is true or not.

There are some who think, that if people do not mention the sacred name of God in their asseverations, they are not guilty of taking God's name in vain, though they swear by any thing or creature else. But whoever considers, what our Saviour said to the scribes and pharisees, concerning swearing, will find the relation every thing and creature in the world has to their Great Creator, is so close and dependant, that he who swears by the one, does also swear by the other. He who swears by the altar, offering, or temple, swears by him, to whom that altar is erected, to whom that

offering is made, and to whom that temple, with its service, is devoted, that is, to God. He who swears by heaven, swears by him who governs therein. He who swears by the earth, swears by him whose footstool it is, who made and preserves it. He who swears by Jerusalem, does it by the great God whose city it was. He who swears by his head, the fountain of life, swears by him who made it; in whose hands is the power of life and death. So that people may swear, without using the name of God, and consequently may offend against this commandment without literally taking the name of the Lord their God in vain. Let none then satisfy themselves, with any such idle distinction, as to imagine they do not swear, unless they pronounce the sacred name of God, when they do it by other things. Indeed, it is better to swear by any thing that does not immediately relate to God, than by his sacred name; because it creates less horror, gives less offence, and is not so bad an example. For though all oaths are very bad, yet some are much worse and more wicked than others.

The guilt, then, of taking God's name in vain, may be contracted, by swearing by any thing that has relation to God, though his name is not directly used: and therefore all sorts of oaths are comprehended under the third commandment; which contains a prohibition of all light rash oaths in our conversation, as well as false oaths, whether in private company, or public courts of judicature, before the magistrate. I shall now only consider all light and rash oaths, whether true or false, hurtful or idle: for the name of God is despised and profaned, if used on slight occasions, though what we swear be true; because the thing was not worthy so much weight as an oath usually requires. And that no one is to swear in light trivial concerns, will appear, by considering the nature of an oath.

An oath is a most religious thing; we acknowledge by it God's omniscience and omnipotence, and declare, that he knows the very secrets of our hearts; that he can and will punish us, if what we affirm is not true, or that we intend not to perform what we then promise. An oath is

the solemn calling on God to bear witness, that what we utter with our mouths, we in our hearts believe to be exactly true; and entreating him to punish and take vengeance on us, if we intend not what we say and promise. The heart of man lies secret to all the world; that therefore we may know whether a man speaks true or false, an oath was appointed; by which we appeal to God as a witness, that our heart and mouth agree; or if they do not, it implies, that we desire God to take vengeance on us, and punish our impiety to him, and falsehood to man. Can any thing be more serious and religious than a solemn oath? So that every time we take an oath by any thing relating to God, we call God to witness the truth of what we say, and to revenge himself on us, if it be false. Let all then remember the serious nature of an oath, and consider, whether it should be used on such light and frivolous occasions, as is too generally done by men, though what they swear is true. It is an awful thing to call on the great God of heaven and earth, the maker and preserver of us all, on whose will we alone depend for every moment of our lives. How dare we then require him to attest and witness matters of such small concern, as we should be ashamed to desire of any serious neighbour? An oath is to make an end of strife, and for confirmation of truth; but then it ought to be a truth of weight and importance that such strife is about. Every allowable oath should be taken, in truth, judgment, and righteousness; with the heart, with the understanding, and good conscience: in order to discover the truth, that judgment may be righteously administered. Where none of those good ends are answered, the name of God is not to be sworn by. Did men examine their past oaths, they would soon find how few were sworn in truth, judgment, and righteousness; how few tended to discover any truth of importance, or contribute to do justice, or to promote righteousness. It would then appear, that every oath, except those sworn before a magistrate, was taken vainly, lightly, rashly, presumptuously, and wickedly;

so far from doing any good, that they are matter of shame, humiliation, and repentance, before God.

Remember also, that such light, rash, and presumptuous oaths, are not only improper and indecent, but are most solemnly forbidden by God; who says to every one,—*thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.* Would God himself descend from heaven, with such solemnity, as you have heard, to forbid the taking his name in vain, had it not been of the greatest moment and importance to us? It is only for our advantage here and hereafter, that God instructs us in his will, and tells us what to do, and avoid, in order to his blessing and making us happy. Did we spend every day in oaths, curses, and profaning God's holy name and word, it would not interrupt his happiness; but it will hurt ourselves, and everlastingly destroy both our bodies and souls, not to comply with his will and commands. For these oaths will some time or other be avenged by God, *who will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.* If not guiltless, then, to be sure, we shall be held guilty of the violation and breach of God's laws, and liable to the punishment due to such offenders and notorious crimes. What particular punishments such are obnoxious to in this life, is not declared; but their sin is so provoking and presumptuous, and has so little temptation to it, that they have much both to apprehend and fear. The prophet tells us, *because of swearing the land mourneth*, the land was then afflicted with several plagues and heavy judgments, by reason of the frequent oaths and perjuries among the people. And I dare say, many among us are afflicted, blasted, and undone, by this audacious contempt and profanation of God's name, who little think from whence the curse and secret canker came. And how should it be otherwise? will God bless those who daily take his name in vain, defy his laws, and curse him to his face; who call for vengeance on themselves and others, almost every word they say? Can they expect a blessing, who scarce ever mention God, but in the way of blasphemy; and make few other prayers than for plagues and mischiefs, damnation and eternal wrath?

How merciful is God, that he does not grant what these poor wretches so earnestly ask him? But let such be assured, that without sincere repentance and leaving off their sin, however God may forbear them in this world, he will most certainly, according to their own curses and repeated wishes, condemn and confound them in the world to come. Those prayers that came from hell, which pleased their ears and filled their mouths so often, shall be heard, to send them to accompany those cursed spirits, on whom they have so frequently called. Let them then remember, that it is a dreadful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God: who has declared, *he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

If then we reflect on what has been said,—That an oath is a most sacred, serious, and solemn act of religion, intended by God for the confirmation of truth, the doing justice and judgment to all men, and to put an end to strife—That it is a most indecent, unseemly thing, to apply such serious and religious affirmations, as oaths are, to light, trivial words, and matters of no weight and moment—That all such oaths are utterly forbidden by God's express command, and that the breach thereof will as surely be avenged by him, as God is true, who said it. If all these things are duly considered, common swearing can never be so harmless and innocent, as some seem to imagine. And if not, how ought we most seriously to repent of it? These considerations nearly concern us, as people that pretend to believe in God, that acknowledge the divine authority of the scriptures, and profess ourselves Christians. There is no answering any of these arguments; no one pretends to justify their practice of swearing, either from scripture, reason, or the authority of wise and good men. Is it not then, strange, that what is so impossible to be excused, or justified, should yet so generally obtain? That what every one condemns in himself and others, should be suffered to prevail and reign, as it were without controul? Especially if we further

Remember, that there is neither pleasure nor profit to be reaped from this

ungodly practice. They who are most addicted to swearing, can give no reason why they so often commit this abominable sin; they freely acknowledge, that there is in it neither pleasure nor advantage. Other sins have one, if not both these temptations, to captivate mankind; they either satisfy some sensual appetite, or gratify some covetous desire or profit; at least they hope to find their account in it. But the swearer gives away his soul for nothing. Of all offenders he makes the worst bargain, gives himself up to everlasting pains and sorrows for that which no one advised or tempted him to, nor approved of; and which he himself never liked whilst doing, nor remembered afterwards with any satisfaction or content. Let any one call to mind the many oaths and profanations of God's holy name he has been guilty of, and see if he is either the richer, wiser, or better esteemed. And who would continue in a practice that brings with it neither pleasure nor advantage? Indeed *what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* But it is still worse to lose his soul for nothing. In all other offences, men aim at some end, and have some motive and temptation thereto; but in this there is no end or temptation, so that a man is condemned by himself and every other person. Besides, it is a practice that all condemn in their wives and children, their servants and relations. Who would not stand amazed, be angry and ashamed, to hear their wives and children answer them with oaths on all occasions, and mingle blasphemies and curses in their common discourses? And yet the laws of God allow it no more in the one than the other. No sex, no age, nor person of any degree, can pretend to a privilege of offending God.

Neither wife nor children will be excused before God, for following the evil example of husband and father; because all should live by the rule of God's law, and not by any one's example. But yet it is certain, that he shall be punished, who gives such an ill example to wife and children. And what a sort of hell must there be in that house, where every one despises God, and tramples under feet his laws, and leave left to reprove, or

intercede with God, for his mercy and forbearance towards a family so wicked and profane. These are some of the most proper arguments which occur, to dissuade all from light and rash swearing. They are such as our own sense and reason may and will suggest. And the condemnation of the guilty will be the greater, as they in their own hearts and consciences know all the reasons and arguments against swearing, as much as the most learned; and therefore want not to be instructed in the duty, so much as to be reminded of what they before knew.

Let then such as have been guilty of this wicked practice, sincerely repent, ask God's forgiveness, and beg the assistance of his grace, to keep them from falling into it for the future. Let us all carefully watch over ourselves, that we speak not hastily and unadvisedly with our lips; remembering God is always present, and hears every word. Let us not on every trifling occasion, give way to anger, which is the parent of many oaths. The least opposition to our judgment, or contradiction to our will, is often a provocation to curse and blaspheme God's holy name; as if that would mend and make things better. Those who are given to swearing should above all things avoid drinking and gaming. If such when they are sober, serious, and in their senses, can hardly forbear swearing, how can it be expected that they should, when they have lost their reason, and are little less than mad? They who abhor an oath when sober, will yet courageously swear if intoxicated with liquor; such therefore should by all means avoid an excess, that so naturally and easily provokes to passion. And as to gaming, there are few that follow it, but what swear excessively; few that lose their money, but also lose their patience and temper. Gaming is one of the most destructive vices men can fall into, and provokes to the greatest anger. It ruins most men at last, and is worse in mean and poor people than the rich; because it excessively wastes that time which they can poorly spare from the care and labour which is necessary to support themselves and families; and spends that small substance which should supply

their wives and children with necessities of life. Lastly, it occasions oaths and curses, blasphemies and dreadful execrations in a most fearful manner; and therefore whoever would avoid swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, must shun gaming, though but for trifles.

And next to the preventing this wicked practice in ourselves, we should endeavour to promote the glory of God, by doing good to others. When our neighbours are apt to swear, we should calmly tell them, we would sooner believe them without an oath; and when they find we deal thus christianly and friendly by them, they will be more on their guard. Those who are more immediately under our care, and depend on us, we may be more free with: even to reprove and punish such as are guilty of dishonouring God. Let us not suffer our children to swear, without our anger and immediate chastisement; nor keep any servant that is guilty of this wicked practice; for God will not bless their labours. Let us employ no workmen who will not do their business without swearing; nor relieve no poor, who thus offend God. Were we to take these courses, we should in a little time, see a great change and reformation of manners. This was formerly the sin of the rich, the easy, and thoughtless great men of the world; but now the poorer sort do by this sin of swearing the most provoke God. Is it not a strange and amazing thing, to hear people swear at the plough, at their horses, and cattle, and any thing that comes in their way? People that depend on the blessing of God for their daily bread, are hourly provoking him, to blast and confound them. Ought not such persons to be made more sensible of their duty, and to pay more honour to their constant heavenly Benefactor? shall they less fear to defy their Maker, and despise their Redeemer, than to speak disrespectfully of their superiors, parents, or masters? Let me then hope, desire, and pray, that the sense of God's honour, the sense of his command, the sense of our duty, and the danger we run, by committing this sin of swearing, may influence us to consideration, repentance, and amendment; that so we may be ever restrained from

taking the name of the Lord our God in vain; always remembering, that he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

SERMON XLI.

By BISHOP BURNET.

The Fourth Commandment.

Exod. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, &c.

THIS is one of the ten commandments which God delivered from Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses to the people of Israel. It is the last of the first table, and is a fence to the observance of the three former; as the last in the second table, *thou shalt not covet*, is to all that precede it. For if the heart is restrained from inordinate desires and passions, it will be easy to abstain from the sins forbidden in the other commandments. And if we *sanctify the Lord's day*, by reflecting seriously on the majesty and attributes of that great God, who *made the heavens and earth*, this will give us such impressions of him, as to preserve us from worshipping any other God, or from worshipping the true God by any image. *For to whom can we liken him, that made all things of nothing?* This will also preserve in us such an awe of him, as that we shall think and speak of him with reverence and godly fear; and will effectually restrain us from all vain oaths, but most of all from swearing falsely, which is one of the highest indignities that can be offered to his holy and great name.

Religion is, or ought to be, the great and constant business of our whole lives. Indeed as our bodies require so many things of us, that they must have a large share of time and thought, and so they would soon engross all, and the sense of religion would be quite lost in the world, if there were not some set times appropriated for the remembrance of it, and for the solemn worship of God. Public

worship is necessary to preserve mankind from falling into atheism on the one hand, and into idolatry on the other. Since if men were only to worship God alone, and apart, it would be more easy for them either to neglect it quite, or to corrupt it according to their various fancies, than when companies and bodies of men assemble and meet together. For the maintaining and advancing the true ends of religion, it is therefore necessary to have times appointed for the service of God; and that on certain days, there should be public assemblies of such numbers of men as can conveniently be brought together in one place. This is also a great means for preserving union, peace and love in the world. But these days should not return so seldom, as to have the sense of religion, which is raised in us one day, to be quite worn off before another returns. Our minds, that are apt to be unsteady and forgetful, must be frequently refreshed, with the remembrance of those things which relate to God, in order to govern our lives and actions; and which will restrain us from sinning against God, and excite us to all the acts of virtue and godliness. Yet, on the other hand, since our bodies have so many necessities that cannot be relieved without much hard labour, it was also necessary that such days for the service of God, should not return too often; lest there should be such frequent interruptions thereby given to our affairs, as to hinder and prevent the business of life. God, therefore, the master of all our time, having made us and all things about us for our use; who is a gentle master, and lays on us no yoke but what is easy, and who knows best what our natures can bear, and what is most fit both for body and mind, has here commanded that the seventh day shall be kept holy, that is, separated from the common business of life, and dedicated to his service. And that God might give this commandment, which is so necessary a means for preserving religion in the world, the more authority, though he could at once have perfected the whole order of the creation, yet he chose rather to do it in a course of six days, than all at once; which being finished, he rested

on the seventh day, that by so great an example, the observation of a rest on that day might be recommended with the more authority to all mankind.

There are indeed other words added in the fifth of Deuteronomy, to those in the text; as, *Remember thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.* These words indeed related to the Jews only, and so were a more particular enforcement of it on them; but the consideration of the rest after the creation, is universal and regards all mankind; it being a true rule, that all laws are to be extended, as far as the reason of them goes. But there having been some disputes and controversies concerning the sabbath, for the satisfaction of the scrupulous, I will more particularly consider its primitive institution, its morality and perpetual obligation, its change from the last to the first day of the week, and the manner how we ought to sanctify it.

As to the institution of the sabbath, there is a difference between learned men. Some refer its beginning to the promulgation of the law, or at farthest to the sending of manna to the Israelites; grounding their notion upon this, that till then we do not read in all the history of the patriarchs and first ages of the world, of any sabbath observed and sanctified by the fathers of those days, which would not have been neglected had any such command been given. Others, who to me seem nearer the truth, place its origin so high as the creation of the world, from these words, *On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.* Here God is said to sanctify the day when he rested; which was precisely on the seventh day after the creation. So that the sabbath is one day younger than man, ordained for him in his state of innocence, that his faculties being then holy and excellent, he might employ them, especially on that day, in the spiritual worship of God his creator. And although we find no more mention of the sabbath, until Moses had conducted the children

of Israel in the wilderness, which was about 2450 years after the creation, yet it is not to be supposed, that among the people of God, who were very careful in observing the law, and delivering it to their posterity, that the observation thereof in keeping this day, utterly ceased; but rather was continued among those who feared God, till again invigorated with new authority from mount Sinai.

With respect to the morality of the sabbath, it ought to be observed, that those things are said to be moral, and of the law of nature, which are in themselves rational and fit to be done, though there was no express command to enjoin it. So that where there is a great equity in the thing itself, enough to sway a rational and honest man to the doing it; this is to be esteemed moral, and authorized by the law of nature. That is, of positive institution, which is observed only because it is commanded, and hath no intrinsical goodness, or reason in itself to recommend it to our practice, but obligeth only upon the injunction and authority of another; as for instance, it is naturally good to obey our parents, to abstain from murder, theft, adultery; and to do unto others, as we would like to have done unto us. These things we are obliged unto by the very light of reason and principle of nature, though there had been no written law of God to impose them. But then there were other things to which God obliged some of his people, that had nothing to recommend them besides the authority of his commands; such were the various ceremonies under the law. The first are therefore most properly called moral and natural commands, the last positive and instituted. The former are commanded because good, the latter are good because commanded. However, certain it is, that a convenient portion of our time is due unto the service and worship of God, by natural and moral right. For surely it is but fit and reasonable that God should have some part of our life and time, who created us on purpose that we might serve and glorify him. And could we ourselves, had it been left to us, have set apart less time for his service, than God hath done? Indeed the law of nature doth not dictate to us any parti-

cular day, one more than another, for the worship of God; so that without the positive command of God, one day is not better than another. And therefore there is a memento prefixed to this command, *remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day*, which is not added to any other precept; intimating to us, that the observation of a particular day is not a dictate of nature, but a positive law imposed by God; and which, had it not been revealed, we should not have been obliged to observe it. Hence this command may be called moral-positive; moral, in that it requires a due portion of our time to be dedicated to the service and worship of God; positive, in that it prescribes the seventh day for that purpose, which the light of nature did not prefix.

We are then evidently as much bound to keep a sabbath as the Jews were, though not to the exact circumstances of the day. Nay, this command was obligatory, even in paradise itself, in the state of innocency, and therefore contains nothing in it unworthy the state of a Christian; for it is no ceremonial command, nor one of those which were typical of Christ, and abolished at his coming; but there still lies a strict and indispensable obligation upon us, to observe a sabbath holy to the Lord. The reasons of this command are all of them moral and perpetual, and therefore oblige us Christians. The equity is the same to us as it was to them, that we should allow one day in seven to the worship of that God who so liberally allows us six for our ordinary affairs. The ease and refreshment of our bodies, from the labours of our calling, is now as necessary as it was then; and we are still as much obliged with thankfulness to remember and meditate upon the great mercy of our creation, as they were. And therefore, if these were sufficient reasons why the Jews should observe a particular sabbath, they are still forcible and cogent to bind us. But though the sanctifying of a sabbath be thus obligatory to Christians, yet it is not the sabbath-day that the Jews and the people of God, before Christ's coming into the world, were bound to observe, that we are to keep. For it is with good reason and upon good autho-

rity changed from the last day of the week to the first; from Saturday to Sunday, called now the Lord's day, because it was the day of the week on which our Lord and Saviour rose from the dead; in memory of which, and as a thankful acknowledgment of the great mercy of our redemption, fully completed by his resurrection, the sabbath hath been translated to this day, and is now celebrated thereon by all the churches of Christ. And this change of the sabbath is the next thing I proposed to consider.

And as the institution of the sabbath was by divine authority, so is the change thereof. For as God rested from his labour on the last day of the week, so did Christ from all his sorrows and afflictions on the first, when he had fully completed the work of our redemption. Christ not only sanctified this day by his resurrection, and the Apostles confirmed the observation of it by their writings and practice; but the Apostles themselves required the first Christians to meet together on the first day of the week; which was at that time honoured with the name of the Lord's day, and has been ever since in all ages of the christian church observed as the day dedicated to the service and worship of God, and to the celebrating of our Lord's resurrection on that day from the dead, to whom he gave all power both in heaven and earth.

Having thus opened to you the ends of this commandment, and the reasons for the change made in the day, I proceed in the last place to consider the manner of sanctifying this day aright, so as to avoid extremes on all sides. We must then remember, *that the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; and that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day.* The Jews, to whom this commandment was frequently repeated in terms that imported much strictness, and a great severity on those that transgressed it, at last raised the observation of it to a superstitious niceness. They came, as most hypocrites are apt to do, to place all religion in those outward performances, that had an appearance of great exactness in obeying the law punctually; and therefore they took occasion from the miracle that our Saviour wrought on the sabbath day, and from

his disciples plucking some ears of corn when they were hungry, to represent him as one that profaned the sabbath. But since it has been already shewn, that the end of the sabbath is to keep alive in the hearts of men a more deep sense of our duty to God, and of the obligations that religion puts us under, and not to load us with superstitious observances, or scrupulosities in smaller matters; it appears from thence, that only such an observation of the Lord's day is required, as tends to perfect and advance the service of God. We ought indeed to make the sabbath our delight, to rejoice on that day, to put from us the common concerns of life, *not speaking our own words, or doing our own ways*; that is not letting our hearts run out into projects and cares relating to our own affairs, or wasting our time in unnecessary discourse; but to rejoice in the liberty to which Christ hath called us, who hath delivered us from this part of the Jewish bondage, and assured us, *that the sabbath was made for man*: and therefore a nice and scrupulous anxiety in small matters, savours more of the Jewish spirit, than the Christian temper. But as we ought to be aware of this extreme, so we are much more in danger of another, I mean that of prophaning this day, either by minding our temporal concerns and affairs, or, which is yet much worse, by thinking we are on this day excused from our labours, that we may serve our lusts and pleasures with so much the more freedom. If the ceasing from labour is made an occasion to intemperance and disorder, to sloth and idleness, to vice and debauchery; this is plainly to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. God did, in the Old Testament, reckon it among those blessings he had heaped on his people, that he gave them his sabbaths to be a sign between him and them, *that they might know that he was the Lord*; and as this, if well improved, is an excellent mean for setting forward the designs of religion; so, on the other hand, we walk contrary to God, and disobey his will, if we do not improve such blessings, by keeping holy the Lord's day, and not to profane it by servile work or sinful practices.

The proper ways of sanctifying this day, are first, the spending some consi-

derable portions of time in our secret meditations, prayers, and studies; and we ought to review the past week, and observe how far we have been endeavouring to do our duty to God, and our neighbour; to examine wherein we have failed, what sins or errors we have been guilty of, what former vows and resolutions we have broken; into which of our former sins we have relapsed, or into what new ones we have fallen, and whom we have any way wronged in word or deed. All these things we ought to call to mind, that we may humbly confess them before God, be truly grieved for them, sincerely repent of and forsake them, and then to form holy and firm resolutions not again to fall into them. We ought also to observe what particular providences of God have occurred to us the past week, either such as tend to awaken and quicken us in our duty, or oblige us to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings to God. Those who are not well instructed in religion, should take pains to increase their knowledge, by reading or causing to be read to them, such portions of scripture, or other good books, as may give them some farther instruction, in order to the working out their *salvation, with fear and trembling.*

When a good man has been thus employing some part of the morning in fitting himself to appear before God, then he ought to go to the house of prayer, remembering that the scriptures join these two together, *Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary.* We ought to consider the prayers and praises of the church, as the public services which we offer up to God, and in which we must remember, what a terrible condemnation they fall under, who *draw near to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, when their minds and hearts are far from him.* We should therefore join our hearts with our lips in every part of the worship. And when we pronounce the confession of sins, we must confess our secret ones to God; when the absolution is read, we ought most humbly to beg our share therein; when the psalms and hymns are repeated, we should raise up our souls, and rejoice in God, for the great blessings commemorated in them; while the lessons are

reading, we ought to observe what particular instructions, reproof, or consolation arises to us, from any part of them; in the collects, and ~~in~~ the litany, we should pour out our hearts to God, for the graces and blessings which we ask of him; in the thanksgiving we ought to join in an humble acknowledgment of those mercies, which we have particularly met with from God. When we make confession with our mouths of our faith, we must be sure to join with it the benefit of our hearts; otherwise we lie to God, when we say we believe that to which our hearts do not consent. While the commandments are repeated, we ought to remember both our former sins, and the infirmities of our nature, together with the temptations to which we are exposed; so shall we have a true sense of our wants, both of *mercy and of grace to help in time of need.*

When we hear sermons, we ought particularly to observe, what parts of scripture are thereby rendered more intelligible to us, that so we may afterwards read these with more profit. We ought also to observe what sins are reprov'd in them, what duties are recommended, what resolutions of doubts, or directions are given, wherein we are more immediately concerned, that so we may lay them up in our hearts, and afterwards reflect upon them. We are not to hear sermons, as men who intend only to censure them, but as becomes those who are resolved to be the better for them; and when we get home we are to consider frequently in our thoughts, such passages in them, as are likely to have a good effect on us, in order to our *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* If these rules ought to be minded by us every Lord's day, much more should it be on days of communion; in which we are called to a more immediate commemoration of the death and sufferings of our Saviour, and to renew our vows to him: as then we again dedicate ourselves to him, and receive the fullest pledges of his love, we must awaken our minds to a greater seriousness, to more contrition for our sins, to more earnestness in our prayers, to greater firmness in our resolutions, to a higher fervour of charity, in

our intercessions for others, to a fuller assurance of faith, and more elevated acts of praise and thanksgiving to God, for all his mercies. But above all, for that astonishing effect of his love to mankind, in sending his son into the world to save sinners; in giving him to die for our sins, raising him again from the dead, and crowning him with glory and honour. Thus we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God, in all the several parts of the public worship, **nor** ought we to think it too hard a burden to return a second time to evening prayer, and sermon; we should rather rejoice at our going often to the house of God together. For if we despise these solemn assemblies, we may thereby provoke God to visit us with a famine, not of bread, or of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.

When the public worship is ended, every one of us ought for some time, to recollect his thoughts, and renew his vows and good resolutions; and remembering what we have learned, either from the word of God, or the sermon, to raise in our minds such a sense of things as is agreeable therunto. Masters of families ought also to bring their families together to prayer, to the reading some portions of scripture, and of other good books; and we ought to edify and admonish one another, by singing of psalms, and serious godly discourses. It is also an act of charity, highly becoming this day, to visit the sick, the widows, and the fatherless in their affliction, to comfort the afflicted, to reconcile differences between neighbours, and to do such other acts of love and kindness, without disturbing too much our own devotion, as may tend to their good; by which peace, kindness, and love may be preserved among friends, neighbours, and acquaintance. For by so doing, we serve God, and advance the true ends, as well as the honour, of religion.

Thus I have shewn what are the particular duties of keeping the sabbath; by which we may perceive how generally God is dishonoured on this day; the

due observation whereof, is one chief means, that God hath appointed to promote and increase religion in the world: and the neglect, or prophaning of it, is one great occasion of that forgetfulness of God, that immorality and impiety, which so much abounds. For if men on this day, do not regard their souls, and the concerns of religion, when they are at leisure, and not engaged about their ordinary affairs, how is it to be expected they should have much thoughts of religion, when their minds are distracted with their temporal concerns, and their bodies fatigued with labour? We ought then to think it one of the greatest blessings to a nation that God gives them his sabbaths; and those who despise this day and wish it was gone, as imagining it too great an interruption to their affairs, may provoke God to shut them out of his rest, even that rest, or *keeping of the sabbath, which remains for the people of God.*

Let us then consider well of how much importance our immortal souls are. For, *what shall it profit us if we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls?* Shall we labour all the week for our bodies, which are perishing, and yet think it too much to dedicate one day in seven to the care of our souls, that are to live for all eternity? Let us consider what a miserable thing it is to be ignorant of our duty in the midst of so much light and knowledge as we enjoy, and which may be easily acquired by any who will spend but a few hours once a week to learn instruction. If we will chuse a wilful ignorance, we may provoke God to give us up to that darkness in which some delight. But if we will hearken to his voice, and apply ourselves to the hearing and learning of his laws, he will make us to learn wisdom in the inward part: he will, by the assistance of his grace, *so open our eyes, that we may behold the wonders of his law; and so quicken our hearts, that we may run the ways of his commandments; he will guide us here with his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory.*

SERMON XLII.

By BISHOP HOPKINS.

The Fifth Commandment.

Exod. xx. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

As there is nothing wherein the truth and power of godliness, and the life of religion, is more concerned, than in a conscientious performance of relative duties, because they daily occur; so there is no subject more ungrateful to men, than to be reminded of these duties, and reproved for the neglect of them: however, the frequent occasion we have to practise them, renders it necessary to consider how to perform them.

I begin with the honour and reverence that is due from children to their parents. Reverence to parents consists in having a respectful love for, and an awful fear to offend them: not such a fear as terrifies, for that is a slavish and tormenting; but an obliging fear, that will create esteem and veneration; that will engage us to observe their commands, and refrain from whatever is displeasing to them. This reverence should be expressed in our words and actions. Our expressions must be full of respect and honour, giving them such titles as their quality and condition require; our words, in answering them, should be few, humble, and submissive. It is but reasonable we should give them the most obliging language, who first taught and instructed us to speak. We must also reverence them with a decent, modest, and respectful bodily behaviour, shewing all external signs of honour. Joseph, though highly exalted in the court of Pharaoh, when he brought his sons to receive the blessing of Jacob his father, bowed himself with his face to the earth. All sour, morose, and unseemly looks towards a parent is threatened to be severely punished. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*

But as we must honour them with reverence, so especially with obedience; without which all external respect is mere formality. *Children obey your parents in all things, for that is well-pleasing to God.* We are obliged to pay them both active and passive obedience. Active, in observing all their commands, that are not contrary to the laws of God; and passive, in suffering their anger and resentment, with all patience and submission, when they require to be performed what is sinful; rather than to disobey God. If they chasten and correct us for their own pleasure, yet we are to reverence them, to bear with their infirmities, to conceal and not expose their weakness to others. And if they are reduced to poverty, we are obliged liberally to assist them, according to our ability; it being a sin the most unnatural, for children that can relieve their necessitous parents, to suffer them, who were the cause and authors of their life, to want a livelihood and comfortable subsistence. We must also honour our parents, by regarding their good instructions, and imitating their pious examples. *My son, says Solomon, keep the father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother.* Until we are set free by their consent, we ought not to enter into the state of marriage, without their knowledge and approbation. If we seriously consider that we owe to our parents our lives, education, and many other benefits, we should never think any thing too much to do for them. Oh! the cares, anxious thoughts, and perplexing fears, which our parents have continually had for our welfare! And can we so return their love and tenderness, as to despise their persons, or become stubborn and disobedient? If we have any ingenuity in our nature, or that the principles of reason and equity are not quite extinguished in us, we should requite the love and solicitude which our parents have shewn us, in the most ample and acceptable manner that is possible. If any by disobedience have brought down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave, let such seriously consider, what an unnatural sin they are guilty of: and since they cannot beg pardon of their parents, let them ask it of God, the great and universal Father of

all; and beseech him, not to revenge their disobedience, by the undutifulness of their own children.

As to the duty of parents to their children, that respects either their temporal or spiritual good. The former consists in protecting and providing for their bodies; as the other does for their souls. This the law of nature requires. In brute beasts there is so strong a parental affection, as that they will expose their lives to the greatest hazard for the preservation and defence of their young. And it the instinct and impulse of nature is so powerful in irrational creatures, how much more should it prevail on us, who have reason given us on purpose to perfect nature? Their weakness and impotency demand from us our care and protection. To how many diseases and dangers are their feeble infancy exposed? and their growing childhood, through want of care and experience, daily leads them into many more. Parents therefore are to guard and defend them from every threatened injury: and if it is inhuman for parents to neglect the care of their children, much more wicked and diabolical is it to hurt or destroy them: yet this is the too common practice of many wretches, who, to conceal their shame, either abandon or murder their innocent babes. And as parents are to protect their children from incident evils, so are they to provide necessities and conveniences for them, according to the station in which Providence hath placed them: even infidels and heathens are taught by the light and law of nature to make provision for their own. If we cannot leave them a sufficiency to subsist on, we should fix them to some business or employ, by which through God's blessing they may procure a livelihood. *Children are not to lay v. for the parents, but parents for children.* And we ought to place them to such business, as is most agreeable to their genius and inclination; otherwise they will be uneasy all their days. The duty of parents to their children relating to spirituals, consists in taking care of their souls, and promoting their eternal happiness. Their first concern is to have them baptised, and admitted members of Christ's church; and whoever neglects this, is highly culpable, and acts very injuriously by their

children. They are afterwards to instruct, admonish, and educate them in the knowledge and fear of God. Would parents bring them to the love of piety and virtue, whilst their minds are flexible, and before they are filled with vanity, the next generation would not be so debauched in their youth, nor obdurate in old age, as is every where now too visible and apparent. Such instructions should be done in an easy familiar way, by catechising and instructing them in the grounds and principles of the Christian religion.

A good example is another duty of parents. If we blaspheme the name of God, by swearing and cursing, abuse ourselves or others by riot and intemperance, how can we expect our children should revere that dreadful name we profane, and love that sobriety and temperance we recommend, but do not practise? What effect can words have, when we contradict them in our actions? If our children improve in wickedness by our ill examples, what will our exhortations and admonitions avail, unless to reproach ourselves, and increase our own condemnation? But if parents will with tenderness and affection instruct their children in the ways of virtue and religion, and confirm them in the practice thereof by their own good example, none would behave undutifully, or live wickedly, but such as are in their nature deplorably vicious. However, if neither instruction nor good example will prevail, then correction and discipline become a necessary duty; though to inflict it, may be as uneasy to the parent as the child. Reason and not passion should prescribe the measure of punishment. Immoderate correction does not amend and reform children, but either exasperates, and makes them more stubborn, or else dispirits and stupifies them. *Fathers should not provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* But where age and decency permit, the severity of discipline is sometimes necessary, if used with prudence. *He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chastens him betimes.* Lastly, Parents are to offer up fervent and earnest prayers to God for their children, beseeching him to own and provide for them, to make them heirs of glory, and coheirs with

Jesus Christ. That he would give them a convenient portion of temporal good things, whereby they may be enabled to serve him with greater cheerfulness; also to bestow on them spiritual blessings, and at last to bring them to eternal glory.

As for supreme magistrates, their duty is to establish the true worship and service of God to reform all corruptions and abuses, to distribute justice impartially, to maintain the cause of the poor and oppressed, and restrain the insolence of proud oppressors. Governors ought to be exemplary for virtue and piety, because the eyes of their subjects are upon them. They ought to fear God above all, to seek his honour and glory, to be prudent in their designs, faithful in their promises, wise in their counsels, observant of the laws, careful of their subjects' welfare, merciful to the poor, kind to the good, terrible to the evil, and just towards all; ever remembering they are men who must give an account unto God of the trust he hath reposed in them. The duties of subjects towards princes and magistrates are honour, obedience, and prayer to God for them. We must honour and reverence them in our thoughts and words; speaking what good we know, and prudently concealing their vices and infirmities. To publish the faults of governors can only tend to alienate the affections, and relax the obedience of subjects. Much more wicked is it to falsely calumniate them by reviling whispers, or suspicious intimations, and to insinuate into the minds of the people sad fears and apprehensions of dangers; all which makes their subjects to despise, if not hate them. We ought to honour them, by contributing cheerfully out of our substance when the necessities of affairs require it. Obedience is another duty we owe them: we are commanded to be subject to the higher powers, to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as sent by him, for the powers that be are ordained of God. Fervent and earnest prayers for our governors is also a great duty of subjects. *Let supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks be made for all men, especially for kings, and all in authority.* A crown is a

heavy, though glittering ornament, and the welfare of thousands depends on the prudent counsels of a prince. The cares and burdens of government are weighty and constant; we ought therefore earnestly to pray that magistrates may be endued with sufficient abilities to discharge their high and important office, to God's glory and their subjects' happiness.

The duties of husbands to their wives are to love, provide for, and instruct them; to act with tenderness, respect, and prudence towards them: love adorns all relations, and is the foundation of this. Though want of love will not dissolve the band of marriage, yet it destroys the comforts of a married state. A wife is the chiefest object of our love, even above parents, children, and friends. *We must leave father and mother for our wife. We must love our wives as ourselves,* be as careful and tender of their good as our own, and resent any injury done to them the same as if offered to us, they two being but one flesh. So that we are to love our wives with as much tenderness and natural affection as we do ourselves; nay, husbands must love their wives as Christ did the church, which was better than he did his own life, for he shed his most precious blood for her. We are to love our wives as Christ loved his church, by bearing with and forgiving their weaknesses, by being willing to submit to many inconveniences for their sakes, by interposing between them and any danger, and by promoting their spiritual good and benefit. A husband is to provide for his wife, to nourish and cherish her, to impart to her, according to his ability, what her occasions require. He ought not to spend in riot and excess among lewd and wicked companions, what should go towards her support and maintenance. *If a man provides not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* As the husband is the head of the wife, so is he the fountain of knowledge and wisdom, and therefore should instruct, advise, and direct her in all emergencies, especially in her duty to God. Indeed, where the wife is blessed with greater prudence and knowledge than the husband, he then ought to submit to her advice, though not to her authority; but this she must tender him with all modesty,

respect, and submission. The husband is also to be tender and mild to his wife, and not to torment her by provoking words or actions. If the wife carefully perform her duty, she ought to be treated with love and kindness, to receive praise and commendation. Her failings should be rebuked with meekness, and so as to discover more of sorrow than anger. Perpetual quarrels mar the comforts of life, and hinder each from performing their respective duties. Where contention between man and wife reigns, business is neglected, and ruin ensues; and nothing is regarded but how to quarrel and rail at one another. Respect and honour is due unto the wife, as being the weaker vessel; a husband is not to be observant to her humour, for that will dishonour him; nor is she to be a slave to him, for that would dishonour her; but she ought to be treated as a kind and dear companion. Lastly, A husband must manage his authority with prudence, not with rigour and violence: the best way to preserve his authority is, by discretion, sobriety, and an exemplary good life; this will produce a reverent esteem and veneration from the wife and family; but a humourous lightness or severity will expose men to the contempt of both. He that will not reverence himself, will not be revered by others; but where there is a mixture of prudence and purity, these will make a man truly awful, and induce the wife and family to esteem and imitate him.

The duties of wives to their husbands are subjection and obedience, respect and reverence. Wives are to *submit unto their husbands, as unto the Lord. As the church is subject to Christ, so must wives be subject to their husbands in everything. The head of the woman is the man, for the woman is of the man. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man.* Man was prior to the woman in the creation, and is therefore superior in nature. *A woman is not to usurp authority over the man, for adam was first formed, and then Eve.* And the Apostle directs wives to be *discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good and obedient to their husbands.* Another duty is respect and reverence: *let the wife reverence her hus-*

band. As he is her head and superior by God's appointment, she ought to reverence him with fear; not a servile and slavish, but an awful and loving fear. She should endeavour to frame her affections and outward behaviour agreeable to the inclinations of her husband; to rejoice when he is pleased, to be uneasy when he is offended. She ought to be helpful and assisting to him in all things; to his soul, by promoting religion and piety in him; to his body, by expressing due care and tenderness; to his good name, by defending his reputation from any injurious slanders; to his estate, by a prudent and frugal management of all his domestic concerns. She is not to dispose of any part of his estate contrary to his mind and consent; her proper office being to govern the family with industry, care, and fidelity. She is to be adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, with sobriety, modesty, and good works. Her countenance, gesture, and words should be such, as to express the inward calmness and serenity of her mind. Impetuous, clamorous, and turbulent women are a torment to themselves and their husbands. There are also mutual duties to be performed by each; such as prayer, prudence in governing their families, discreet education of children, mutual love, and bearing with each other's infirmities.

The duties of servants to masters are obedience, reverential fear, diligence, honesty, and veracity. Their obedience is required in all things not contrary to the law of God: *servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.* Should the commands of masters be impertinent, impetuous, or tyrannical, yet servants are no more exempted from obedience, than masters shall be from punishment, for requiring unreasonable things. Servants are also to suffer patiently the reproofs and corrections of their masters *without answering again, or murmuring.* A quiet silent submission is required, even when the servant hath given no just cause for being rebuked, but that it proceeds from the unprovoked rage and passion of a master. The Apostle's command is, *servants be subject to your own masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also*

to the froward; if a man for conscience towards God suffers wrongfully, and takes it patiently, this is praise-worthy, and acceptable to God. But if, when we are buffeted for our faults we take it patiently, what room for glory is this? Indeed of all things belonging to the duty of a servant, this is the most difficult, and nothing can sweeten and make it tolerable but a sense of duty, and the expectation of a reward from God. Reverential fear of masters is another duty of servants, who are commanded to be subject to their masters with all fear. This fear is to be expressed in their words and actions: in their words, by forbearing all irreverent muttering, and indecent expressions; by giving such respectful titles as their place and station require; by speaking well of them, if they can with truth; or otherwise to be silent, and conceal their infirmities: in their actions, by a modest and respectful behaviour, by observing their commands, and doing what they think will be pleasing and acceptable to them. Diligence is another duty: he is not a faithful servant who is slothful and negligent, for if he doth not use his strength and time in his master's service, he is a thief, and robs him of so much advantage. Servants are also to be just, faithful, and honest, not to defraud their masters of the least thing, but to serve them with fidelity and integrity. Many have been reduced and ruined by the unfaithfulness and carelessness of servants, either stealing from them, or prodigally wasting their properties. Truth and veracity is another duty: lying is a sin very odious to God, and most detestable to men. Servants are as the hands and eyes of masters, and ought to report nothing but what is true. Lying is the effect of cowardice, of a base slavish fear. Lastly, Servants are to serve their masters with good-will and singleness of heart; not as men-pleasers, only with eye-service, who are no longer diligent than their masters are present; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Servants are to have respect not so much unto men as unto God; and to serve well, because God hath commanded it. Let their service be never so mean, painful, and laborious, yet if they perform it

out of conscience to God's command, he esteems it as done to himself, and will hereafter bountifully reward them. And this is a great encouragement for servants to persevere in well-doing.

As to masters, their first duty is a prudent care in the choice of servants. This is a concern of great moment, on which the comfort and happiness, or the trouble and misery of a family doth much depend. The qualifications of a servant are, ability to discharge the duties of his place, an upright conscience, and piety towards God: the last is of great importance though too little regarded; for few inquire about their servants' principles in religion, but chuse them as we do beasts of burden, the most strong and able. But this is very imprudent and sinful. Masters should never think servants fit for their service, unless they are careful to worship that God whom both are bound to serve and obey. Wicked servants will corrupt a whole family; their lewd examples will soon tempt others to be as bad as themselves. To this may be imputed that general profaneness so prevalent in most families, especially where there are numerous servants. Children by conversing with such, here imitate the first rudiments of vice; learn the first syllables of oaths, curses, and obscenity; and who, for their easy docility and ready aptness thereto, are applauded by these impious wretches. Such servants are the pests of mankind, as they corrupt those in their youth, who may afterwards have an influence on the state and commonwealth, and thereby render them a shame to their families, and a curse to the kingdom. For where servants are wicked, children are more influenced by their flattery and examples, than the authority and command of parents. It is therefore the wisdom and concern of masters to chuse such servants as know their duty, and make conscience of performing it, in whose integrity and fidelity they may repose themselves in safety. Another duty of masters is, to govern their servants with prudence, and to make a reasonable provision for them. A master's demeanor should be grave and awful, and his very countenance beget reverence. If a master's behaviour is mean and indiscreet, servants will grow

familiar and contemptuous; not that masters are to command with rigour or to give ill and reviling language, for that will discourage servants, and make them hate their place; but there should be such a mixture of mildness with gravity, of love with authority, as that the servants should be both compelled and inclined to obedience. Power may force submission, but only reason and gravity can render masters venerable. The commands of masters should be lawful, for servants have a supreme lord and master in heaven whom they must fear and obey. A servant is obliged to work, but not to lye, steal, or cheat for a master; they must *obey God rather than men*. As to correction, prudence must be the measure of what is fit, according to their age, temper, and the nature of the offence. It should be inflicted for reformation and amendment, and not out of passion and revenge: reproof is generally the best discipline.

Another duty of a master is, to provide for the bodies and souls of servants. He is obliged to supply them with all things necessary. *Masters are to give unto their servants what is just and equal*. To detain from them the reward of their labour as covenanted or agreed for, is a crying and provoking sin. The care of their souls is also the master's concern. For he is priest and prophet in his own house, as well as lord and king. He is to instruct his family in religion, to inform their ignorance, excite them to serve God, to pray with and for them, to direct them in the way to heaven, and, above all, to set before them a holy, pious example. Masters should remember, that as their servants have immortal souls, so God hath entrusted the care thereof to them. Masters should instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, rebuke the disobedient, discard the incorrigible and audacious, and more especially require their servants religiously to observe the Lord's day, in the due observance of which a great part of the life of religion consists.—Thus have I considered the mutual duties of these several relations; and it is necessary to observe, as a general rule, that if one party omits to discharge his duty, this is no excuse for the other. Should a father be careless

and cruel, yet the child's duty still remains; should a master be tyrannical and severe, yet a servant is to reverence, fear, and obey him; and so of other relations.

To the precept in this commandment, *honour thy father and mother*, is added as a motive and encouragement, the promise of long life. Indeed this promise was made to the Jews, and concerned the land of Canaan, which was a type of our enjoying the felicity of heaven as a reward for our observing the laws of God. For as the Apostle says, *godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promises of this life, and that which is to come*. He that *desires to live, and loveth many days, let him depart from evil and do good*. But in all promises of temporal blessings a condition is implied, that they shall only be fulfilled, if they promote our eternal happiness; and therefore God doth often in mercy abridge this promise by taking us from the world, lest it should take us from him.

SERMON XLIII.

By Dr. LUPTON.

The Sixth Commandment.

Exod. xx. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THE natural impressions and obligations of moral duty, which immediately relate to the preservation of human life, are such strong guards to secure it, that nothing surely but a very powerful temptation can ever break through them. Other sins more easily prevail over us, because they are agreeable and pleasing to our corrupt inclinations; but, corrupted as our nature is, there is something so shocking in the sin of murder, that a man must offer the utmost violence to his own natural disposition before he can prevail with himself to destroy his own or his neighbour's life. And lest any thing should be wanting to render these strong bonds of duty still more inviolable, God hath been pleased to confirm and enforce the voice of nature by this express revealed law, *Thou shalt not kill*. In discoursing on these words, it will be ne-

cessary to adjust the latitude and extent of the commandment, and then to represent the guilt and danger which men incur by transgressing it.

As there are some instances of murder which are not universally allowed to be such, but are often palliated under various pretences and false colours of vindication; so there are some cases wherein one may violently take away the life of another without violating this command. The lawfulness of this, in the case of self-preservation, is so certain and obvious, that it can scarce admit of any mistake, so long as this necessary caution is observed, that a man should not on every little suspicion or appearance of danger presently invade his neighbour's life, though he may innocently do it; but only when the danger is so manifest that he must unavoidably either give or receive the fatal-stroke. The lawfulness of war, on some occasions and under certain restrictions, is also plainly warranted by the authority of holy scripture, as well as by the nature and reason of things, the situation and circumstances of human affairs; it being often impossible for states and kingdoms to support their just rights, or even preserve themselves or their allies from utter ruin, by any other means than war. Magistrates are likewise invested with a just authority to inflict capital punishments on offenders, by cutting off the corrupted members of the body politic, for the preservation and benefit of the whole society. The innocence of that person also is abundantly clear, who, through ignorance or unavoidable accidents, deprives another of life. For an action which has no foundation in the will and intention of the agent, is not properly a moral action, and consequently cannot be criminal. And therefore under the Mosaical dispensation there was a sanctuary provided by divine appointment for every one who was so innocently unfortunate as to kill his neighbour ignorantly and at unawares, lest the avenger of blood should pursue and slay him before his innocence could be sufficiently cleared. So that whoever knowingly and designedly, (but not ignorantly or accidentally,) without any necessity, arising from any imminent and unavoidable danger of his own destruction,

does take away or invade his neighbour's life, is guilty of the sin forbidden in this commandment. And this imputation of murder properly falls on them who thus deprive their neighbour of life, either by open assault and violence, by stratagem and secret contrivance, by shedding his blood themselves, or engaging others to embroil their hands in the murder; either by acting as principals or accessaries, by command or persuasion, by threatening or encouragement, by direct concert and consultation, or by suggestion; either by bearing false witness against him themselves, or by suborning others; or by any instruments, means, or methods, which are not allowed by divine authority.

And from hence it likewise follows, that every person who knowingly and wilfully destroys his own life, is guilty of murder. For he has no authority to become the instrument or cause of his own death. We are not the proprietors of our lives, and therefore may not dispose of them at pleasure. God who gave them hath the only right to take them away; so that whoever offers violence to his own life, manifestly invades the prerogative, and usurps the right and authority of God. Duels also are direct violations of this commandment; being to be ranked in the number of those violent attempts on human life, which are not allowed by divine authority; and therefore the guilt of murder is chargeable on those who engage in them. The liberty allowed to a private man of destroying his neighbour's life, is both by natural and revealed law solely confined to the case of self-preservation; but that plea is utterly foreign to the condition and circumstances of him who formally gives or accepts a challenge. And he adds to sin of making an unnecessary attempt on his neighbour's life, by needless throwing himself into the utmost danger of losing his own. Nor can mutual consent and permission excuse or be any just vindication of such men as thus expose their lives; because God being the sole proprietor, the absolute lord of every man's life, no one has any right to dispose of or determine the duration of it, nor to transfer the disposal of it to another. Lastly, This commandment extends not only to our actions, but to our words, to

the secret intentions and affections of our hearts. Our blessed Saviour expressly applies it to the several degrees, and various effects of causeless anger, breaking forth into bitter, reproachful language; and the Apostle tells us, that hatred is murder, and inconsistent with the hopes of heaven. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and he knoweth that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Having thus considered the latitude and extent of the commandment, I proceed

To represent the guilt and danger which men incur by transgressing it. If the measure of this transgression is taken, either from the indignity thereby offered unto God, or from the injury done to man, from the punishments expressly denounced against it or from the anguish and horror which it is apt to leave on the mind, we shall find abundant reason to assign it a place amongst the most heinous crying sins. The first instance of murder in the world was closely followed with perplexity, oppression of spirit, and intolerable despair. *My punishment (said Cain, the abandoned fugitive) is greater than I can bear; or rather, my iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. Every one that findeth me shall slay me.* It was a dismal, but natural apprehension, which his guilt suggested to his thoughts, that the whole creation must be alarmed on the occasion, and stand ready to execute vengeance on him. And that weight of confusion, which natural conscience lays on such sinners, must be vastly increased by the severe expressions of God's indignation against them. *The Lord abhors the blood-thirsty.* Atonements and means of satisfaction were by divine institution provided for the sins of the people in several other instances of a very high and provoking nature; but God hath expressly forbid shewing mercy and compassion to a murderer, or taking any satisfaction for his life. *If any man hate his neighbour, and smite him mortally that he die, thine eye shall not pity him. Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, but he shall surely be put to death.* Not the cities of refuge, nor the holy altar of God, (a sanctuary the most sacred and inviolable,) could exempt such an unpardonable offender from punishment; if a man come pre-

sumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die. And when the irreversible sentence of death is pronounced on him, the reason given is, that in the image of God made he man. Contempt of God is the great aggravation of sin, which in this of murder is aggravated to a singular height. Not satisfied with defying his laws, and assuming his dominion, they insult his very being, by defacing and destroying the only image of himself, which he hath impressed on the visible world. The injury done to man, is also very notorious; for other injuries may be repaired, or admit of some compensation, but this is utterly irreparable. Other injuries may rob a man of his estate, reputation, or some particular advantages; but this summary of mischief deprives him all at once of every temporal benefit and satisfaction: nay, it may prove fatal to the sufferer's soul, as well as body, and at once involve him in the first and second death, by depriving him of that space to repent, which might have been necessary to his eternal salvation. Or should the injury not follow the sufferer in a future state, and press him down into everlasting destruction, as not happening to him when in an impotent state; yet it must be an heavy weight to him, even in respect to his view of that eternity into which he is so suddenly sent.

For who can bear the thoughts of being hastily dispatched into the other world? Who is not exceedingly desirous of going down to the grave in peace and quiet? Even the best of men would be glad of a few leisure minutes at the last, deliberately to review and lament their past defects and miscarriages; would be glad of a little calm and undisturbed space of time, in the conclusion of their lives, to adorn their souls, and prepare them for their immediate appearance before the glorious and unspotted presence of God. How dreadful then must that injury be, which deprives men of circumstances so advantageous and desirable? Such is the guilt and danger attending the transgressing of this commandment, in the first instance of it, as signifying wilful murder, or offering unlawful violence to our neighbour's life.

I shall next consider the reasons of the guilt and danger of those persons who destroy their own lives. That they are transgressing against this commandment has been already proved; it will therefore be needless to shew, that they are involved in the guilt, and obnoxious to the punishment of murder in general; but they expose themselves in a particular manner to the greater condemnation, by some singular sentiments and dispositions, which are commonly the foundation of this unnatural crime. For instance, if men destroy themselves, to avoid present sufferings, do they not tacitly declare, that God shall not act by them as he pleaseth; that they will resolutely break through what he hath determined and established; that they will not be confined to such circumstances as he hath allotted them; but will wrest their lives out of his hands, and not suffer him to prolong them beyond the limits of their own pleasure? And if this is the secret language of their hearts, what can be expected, but that God should execute the severity of his wrath upon them? Or if pride, envy, and ambition do so govern their minds, as that in the abundance of their arrogance and resentment they will violently remove themselves out of the world, perhaps because they are not advanced to a more advantageous situation in it; what can they reasonably expect or imagine, but to feel the weight of Solomon's observation, *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*? a fall into eternal as well as temporal destruction. For what foundation can there be of hope that God will forgive a flagrant sin, without the sinner repenteth? and how can a man truly repent of a sin, in the very commission of which he dies? There are some other sins besides that of offering direct violence to a man's life, which have been usually esteemed branches of self-murder; as intemperance, or the indulgence of any other vice, which impairs the health and destroys the life.

As to the guilt and danger of engaging in duels, these being manifest instances of wilful murder, such persons expose themselves to the severities of God's indignation denounced against it. Those who die in such engagements go into the

other world, not only void of charity, which is absolutely necessary to their future happiness, but glowing hot with wrath and fury. And when such passions have the last possession of their souls, what society of spirits can they be qualified for to live with to all eternity? Or should they not immediately perish in the conflict, yet is their guilt the same in the sight of God, the searcher of hearts, who judges of men's wicked attempts, not by the success or event of them, but by the designs and intentions from which they proceed. And dare a man hazard eternal and unspeakable misery, for the sake of resenting an affront, or redressing an injury, how great soever? Is it a rational conduct, only to avoid a groundless imputation of cowardice, for a man to run such hazard to testify his false courage, by insulting the Lord of heaven and earth, and spending the last efforts of his strength and life in an act of defiance and rebellion against him that gave them? For supposing duels the only possible means of redressing some kinds of injury, it would not from thence follow, that recourse should be had thereto, by those who call themselves christians, and acknowledge the divine authority of the holy scriptures, which enjoin us not to *avenge ourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for, saith the Lord, vengeance is mine*. If the world hath advanced some mistaken notions, in direct opposition to God and the gospel, can those who espouse and are influenced by them be properly numbered amongst the servants of Christ? Every man who professeth the gospel is obliged to an inviolable exercise of patience, meekness, and forbearance, under the various circumstances and occurrences of life, in imitation of our Lord and Saviour. How inconsistent then is it, for a christian to be governed by such false notions of honour, as are directly contrary to the fundamental rules of his duty?

Whoever faithfully and constantly adheres to virtue and the positive commands of God, despising every imputation and reflection levelled against him, gives a much stronger evidence of true greatness and generosity of mind, than those who relinquish their duty to avoid that uneasi-

ness which such treatment occasions. Every great mind will make favourable allowances for little infirmities and heats of passion, which are the unhappiness of human nature, and too apt to arise amongst dearest friends; nor is he less inclined to make all lawful satisfaction for any injury he hath inadvertently offered his neighbour. To fear men more than God is the most dishonourable misapplication and degeneracy of fear. To be deterred from obedience by the uneasy apprehension of being censured for the faithful discharge of it; or to be laughed and frightened out of our duty, are certain indications of a weak, little, and base spirit, which for want of ability to support itself, readily gives up the most excellent ornaments and accomplishments, when any attempt is made on them. Those therefore who engage in duels, from fear of suffering some seeming calumnies and reproaches, do at once forfeit all just pretensions to true honour and generosity of mind, all claim and title to eternal salvation.

Lastly, We must take diligent heed not to transgress this commandment, by the intentions and affections of our heart, though no actual violence is committed. Those who have not sufficient degrees of natural courage, or want favourable opportunities actually to defile their hands with blood, may yet sacrifice their neighbour in their secret thoughts and wishes, and indulge their imagination in the view of those mortal wounds they dare not give; and men, who are afraid to handle the instruments of death, may shoot out their arrows, even bitter words, and pierce the souls of their brethren, with the expressions of cruelty, malice, and contempt. But the christian law is, that *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* And this demonstrates the excellence of the gospel of Christ, that as moral duty is

therein raised to the most elevated height of perfection, so more especially does it recommend and promote the exercise of universal charity and benevolence, by an absolute prohibition of all strife, variance, clamour, evil speaking, wrath, hatred, envy, and malice; for these every disciple of Christ has solemnly renounced, and whoever indulges them dishonours the profession, and forfeits the gospel privileges.

Let then the use and application of this discourse be, that the heinousness of the sin of murder should raise in us a proportionable abhorrence of it, and the utmost esteem and desire of those qualities and practices which are most directly opposite thereto; that we should not only have the tenderest regard to the preservation of our neighbour's life, but to the comforts and conveniences of it; that instead of violence and injury, we should abound in acts of beneficence; that anger should be prevented by habitual meekness; malice by loving-kindness and compassion; revenge by constant endearments; and hatred by complacency and delight. So shall we fully answer the end of the commandment; and being thus heavenly in our dispositions here, we cannot fail of obtaining an inheritance in those mansions of everlasting peace, love and joy, where our Saviour is gone to prepare a place for us.

Let the consideration of what has been said possess our minds with the greatest horror and abomination of this sin of murder; and make us extremely watchful of ourselves, that we never fall into it, but keep at the farthest distance, and tremble at the least approaches towards any degree or instance of it. Let us pray for and endeavour to obtain an humble, meek, and charitable temper; more especially, for the continual assistance of God's grace, which can alone prevent, preserve, and restrain us from this, or any other the most enormous transgression. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XLIV.

By BISHOP BURNET.

The Seventh Commandment.

Exod. xx. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

As this was one of the ten commandments spoken by God himself, so the punishment of it under the Jewish law, was likewise appointed by God; and the man that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. But though in the New Testament there are no laws of this nature, against this or any other sin, yet there are much more terrible denunciations made of the judgments of God against it: for, as the author of our blessed religion was, in his own person, holy, harmless, and undefiled, so he has most strictly charged us to be pure and holy in all manner of conversation, as he who called us was holy; without which we are assured, we shall not see the Lord; and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

One part of the judgment of God against those who live not answerably to their holy profession is, that God gives them up to uncleanness, and to vile affections; and so odious were all the sins of the flesh to the holy apostles, that they charged the first christians not to keep company with any man that was called a brother, that is, a christian, if he was a fornicator, a covetous man, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner, and with such an one no not to eat. St. Paul also warns us not to deceive ourselves; for neither fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous men, drunkards, revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And reckoning up the works of the flesh, he begins at adultery, fornication, and uncleanness; and concludes, that they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that therefore, they that are Christ's, that is, true christians, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The same apostle does also most

earnestly charge the Ephesians in these words; but fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becomes saints. And to avoid all approaches to it, he charges them to abstain from filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient. By which is meant all steps towards impurity, lewd jests, and indecent discourses; to which he adds, for this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And because there were in those days, as well as in this corrupted age, some who made light of this sin, and perhaps scoffed at the judgments of God, which were declared against it; he says of these, let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore partakers with them.

The same things are repeated by him in his epistle to the Colossians; and in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he tells them, that as it was the will of God, that they should abstain from fornication, so it was also the great means of preserving themselves pure, even their sanctification; and that, though the worship of idolaters was commonly defiled with great licentiousness, and many disorders of this sort, yet God hath called Christians not to uncleanness, but to holiness. And in the visions of St. John, whoremongers are in two different places reckoned among those that are shut out of the New Jerusalem, and who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Nor did our Saviour only condemn acts of uncleanness, but he being the author of a religion designed for the cleansing of our hearts, has carried the precept further in these words; ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. In this he strikes at the root of sin, which is in the heart; for when lust is once conceived there, it bringeth forth sin; and of this sin it may more

particularly be said, that when it is finished, it bringeth forth death. For Solomon, whose heart was corrupted by those impure desires, tells us, from sad experience, that he who is enticed by a harlot, *goeth after her as an ox to the slaughter, as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver, and as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life; and he concludes, her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* Now, though there may seem to be an extreme severity in our Saviour's charging impure looks and desires with the sin of adultery; yet this, instead of making the yoke of the commandment heavier, makes it really lighter; it being much harder for us to maintain our purity, if we let our eyes and desires wander after forbidden objects, than it will be to stop the first motions to sin; and with holy Job, to *make a covenant with our eyes,* and upon that to say, *why then should I think upon a maid?* St. Paul also useth this argument to persuade us to purity, *that the body is made not for fornication, but for the Lord;* that we are all one body in Christ, and therefore, that our bodies are the members of Christ; that by this sin, those bodies that are sanctified, come to be defiled, and that *our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in us:* and elsewhere he says, *that if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple we are.* Now if it would give us horror to see the house of God defiled, by putting unclean beasts in it; or which is worse, if we saw the churches prostituted by making them public places of lewdness and vice, we ought, according to St. Paul's reasoning, to esteem it a much more heinous thing, if these living temples of God should be thus profaned.

From hence we see, that if we believe the holy scriptures, and take the New Testament to be the rule of our life, nothing can be more clear and express, than that these sins are so odious to God, that no man who lives in them, can have any part or portion in the mercies of God, but that he is of the number of those workers of iniquity that are to be cast out *into outer darkness, where there is weep-*

ing, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever. These laws are set us by a holy God, who is of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity,* for only the pure in heart and life shall see him. Nor can the spotless Lamb of God suffer any to follow him, who with the swine love to wallow in this defilement. If we think these precepts hard, and these threatenings terrible, this is only for want of due consideration. We must then govern ourselves according to the doctrine of Christ, or renounce our christianity, if we would rather gratify our impure appetites and desires, than keep our bodies thus pure and holy; there is no reconciling this to our holy faith; we cannot be both the members of Christ, and the members of a harlot. We must not therefore flatter ourselves with false notions, as if these were only dreadful words given out to fright us; they are true, or all christianity is only a cunningly-devised fable. For there are no parts of the whole New Testament more plain and express, and less liable to any doubtful meaning, than these which have been now delivered; and therefore, if we believe that God has revealed his gospel, as the only means by which we can fly from the wrath which is to come, *when Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power;* then we must be very diligent and sedulous to obey these precepts, that *so cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we may perfect holiness in the fear of God, and glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's.*

And besides all that hath been said of the wrath and judgments of God against these sins, if we will but consider the state and order of this world, and our temporal and eternal interest, we shall see many other reasons concurring to enforce the observance of these commandments, and obliging us to acknowledge, that they are holy, just, and good. As for married persons, they have mutually given their faith to one another, by a so-

lemon vow and oath made in the presence of God; so that in this sin both perjury and impurity meet together in the same action. The married man that lets his heart wander after other objects, neglects his own house, loaths his wife, and hates his children. Consider, you husbands, what you do, in the words of Solomon, *lest you give your honour unto others, and your years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with your wealth, and your labours be in the house of a stranger; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed.* When you have nothing left but poverty and shame, rottenness, or loathsome painful diseases, together with a guilty conscience; more exhausted with the horrors of a vicious life, than the body that is perhaps disfigured, or, at least, violently tormented with the remnants of those loose and unruly appetites. Follow therefore the advice of the wise man *Drink waters of thy own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.* (a figure of speech importing a man's living happily with his own wife,) *let them be only thine own and not strangers with thee; let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth, and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my soul, be ravished with a woman? For the ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.* Let us not flatter ourselves with this, that our sins are secret, and no eyes see them; nor yet wait for the twilight, and because we have disguised our face say, no eye shall see me; but we should remember, that *God compasses our paths, and is acquainted with all our ways, and besets us before and behind:* and though we may foolishly say, *surely the darkness shall cover me, yet even the night shall be light about us; even the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him.* Alas! all these stolen pleasures, that are now so sweet; when our iniquities shall compass us about, and make us possess many wearisome days and nights; when, between a wasting body and a guilty mind, a ruined fortune and a broken family, we feel the arrow of the Almighty piercing us, and the poison of them drinking up

our spirits; when our sins have left us nothing in the decays of nature, but shame and infection, tribulation and anguish; then, even when it is perhaps too late, we shall think of crying unto God, and repenting of our sins, after they have left us and not we them; and forsaking them only, as not being able to live any longer in them.

O foolish people and unwise! Why will you not in time consider what shall be the end of all these things? Ye adulteresses, that, against the decencies of your nature, and that modesty which is the peculiar ornament of your sex, forget the vows of marriage, and your covenant with God; consider what you lose when you cast off your innocence, and make yourselves the reproach of your husbands, to whom you should be a crown; how you draw infamy on your children; by intermixing a spurious and uncertain brood; how you rob your husbands of their honour, ye children of their fame, and yourselves of your reputation and credit; how you dissolve the tie of marriage, and the affection of a married state; how by an indecent and unchaste deportment, you raise terrible disquiets and uneasiness in the minds of your husbands, *for jealousy is the rage of a man.* It provokes a revenge that often cannot be appeased but with blood, either that of the injured husband, or the object of his jealousy; and the guilt of such blood lies chiefly on the woman, whose unchaste deportment has kindled the furious passion. Your sin is often robbery, as well as adultery and perjury, when the child of one man inherits the estate of the other on whom he is imposed, and who carries away either the whole, or at least his share in an inheritance, that of right belongs to others.

Consider this, all ye that defile the marriage bed, and think to face it out before the world, either with the hypocritical shews of piety, or with a loud and clamorous boldness. Remember you have to do with God, *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness,* and who will perhaps raise such horrors in your souls, that you will not be able to bear your own turpitude, but become a terror to yourselves, as well as a reproach to all that belong to you. As for

those who have, perhaps, some apprehension of the guilt of defiling the marriage bed, and therefore, that they may have less remorse for the free range of pleasure, in which they intend to live, will not enter into a married state, but deny themselves in no appetite, and so live loose and ungoverned lives; let such persons, who walk in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, remember, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Consider that these pleasures of sin, that are but for a season, will waste your strength; expose your life and health to many dangers, and above all corrupt your minds; they will entice you to be the instruments of tempting others to sin, by bringing a double guilt upon you, both your own and the persons whom you exclude. Remember you will be the instrument of giving being to an illegitimate issue, who are born to inherit shame and contempt, poverty and misery; you refuse to follow the method that God has appointed for the increase of mankind, but chuse that which your brutish appetites suggest. You who follow forbidden pleasures, run yourselves into such a shameful course of life, as to be often tempted to deny and disown it, even with oaths and bitter imprecations. There is a fatal connection of sins one with another; ill actions commonly give suspicions, from whence often arise challenges and accusations, and these cannot be thrown off but by bold denials and impudent falsehoods, which are too frequently confirmed by bloody oaths. Injustice of all sorts also proceeds from this ill course of life; persons who promise themselves to one another are often false therein, and so carry a curse with them into any marriage which they may afterwards contract. In short, these men walk after their flesh, and not after the spirit; they prefer their own inordinate affections to the laws of God, and the precepts of the gospel. For St. Paul hath expressly said, that to avoid fornication, every man ought to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband; and if any cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than burn. Therefore, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war a-

gainst your souls; remember that you are redeemed from your vain conversation; be ye therefore as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts. Remember that whoredom and wine take away the heart; and that, by the means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a morsel of bread; therefore keep you from the evil woman, and from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eyelids; for the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are brands, is more bitter than death. Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her; and he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall into this pit.

Lay these things to heart seriously, and in time, before you have purchased the knowledge of them at too dear a rate. Consider further, that if such advices were given by Solomon, under the old dispensation, in which, by reason of the infirmity of the Jewish nation, and for the hardness of their hearts, many things were dispensed with to them; certainly they are much more binding to us Christians, who are called to so high a degree of purity. Therefore, it is not enough for us to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, but we are commanded to walk as the sons of God, and to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. It is the peculiar character of christianity, that it obliges us to mortify our bodies, to crucify the flesh, to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man; so that the same mind may be in us that was in Christ Jesus. We must abstain even from all appearances of evil; which is set forth in this noble figure, hating even the garment that is spotted by the flesh; that is, our abhorring every approach to any degree of defilement.

If you think these things are difficult, and not easy for flesh and blood, that is not to be denied; but if you follow the methods, recommended in the scriptures, you will find the difficulty to grow daily much less. Nor, indeed, ought you to think it hard, if you are required to be at some pains for the saving of your

souls. You are willing to put yourselves to trouble for every thing else; the learning of a trade, the following of husbandry, the life of a soldier, are all things of great difficulty, and that yield but a small reward; yet men submit themselves to much toil and drudgery in every one of these. Most men's diversions and pleasures put them to a good share of trouble; and is it to be imagined, that so great a thing as eternal life, should be obtained without any difficulty or labour? Yet, after all, the labour is not so great, but it *may* be overcome. If men will by rioting and drunkenness, by sloth and idleness, and by exposing themselves to such temptations as they may easily avoid and resist in the beginning, if they are a little watchful; I say, if they will by such methods *be laying in provision for the flesh, and for its lusts and affections*, then it is no wonder if their appetites, thus indulged, should be high and unruly. But if they will learn to be sober and temperate, and study by fasting often to subdue the body; if they will avoid all that company and those occasions that betray them into these sins; keeping themselves free from the first steps, in which the appetite is yet but weak and feeble, and will follow the works of their calling with care and application, so as to employ their thoughts and time in them; and if they will make choice of such diversions, as do not betray them into these temptations; they will then find it very easy to resist or avoid them. The heathens understood this, and even one of the lowliest of their poets tells us, that the strength and arts of lusts perish, if men take care to be well employed and are not idle.

In the next place, you ought to follow the rule of religion, and to take a helpmate with whom you may hope to live happily together. Where the husband and wife are united to each other with the bonds of virtue and religion, and love one another in the Lord: as this is a kind of heaven upon earth, so it secures their hearts from impure and wandering desires, as long as they so continue and remain. In order to this end, you ought to be very careful in the choice you make in marrying yourselves, or your children; that you may not sacrifice both

the peace and purity of your lives to those base considerations, upon which many of those, who even pass for wise persons in the esteem of the world, chuse a consort, and sell themselves or their children for a little money, or some other secular ends. But those who would marry in the Lord, that is, as becomes christians, ought to make such a choice, that in the company of the person with whom they are to lead their lives, they may hope to serve God, and to save their own souls; therefore the virtue and piety of the person ought to be the first and chief thing minded; not but that other considerations ought also to have a part and share therein; but when regard is only had to wealth, or other carnal ends, then the marriage will be soon repented of, the bed loathed, nothing but brawlings and contention, and at last a dissolution of that sacred faith.

To the sins of our fathers, this age has added the open giving up of marriages, and the parties allowing themselves that, which no religion nor law can allow them; to live impudently in a consortship with other persons, as if they were married to them; which is a degree of wickedness, that we have added to the former measure of our sins, and which, without this, was measure heaped up and running over. God grant it may not be the filling up the measure of our fathers; and that God who has threatened, *that he will be a swift witness against the adulterers, and the false swearers*, do not for the sake of those breakers of wedlock, who become guilty of both these sins at once, arise against this nation to judgment because of those crimes, whereof men are so far from being ashamed, that they openly commit them in the sight of the sun.

To conclude, Let every man pray earnestly to God, that he would assist him with his grace to subdue and mortify this body of sin, with all its lusts and evil affections. And such as do earnestly beg this of him, and do also make use of the means which he hath appointed to keep themselves pure and undefiled, may rest assured and well satisfied, that he who gives liberally to all men, and upbraideth no man, will either grant continence, which St. Paul *calls a special*

gift of God, that indeed every man hath not; or to such whom, by not granting this, he calls to a married state, which is honourable in all men; he will grant a blessing in their marriage; for a good will is said to be the gift of God, a prudent wife is from the Lord; and God, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, will certainly grant to all such as do earnestly seek to him, either one or other of these gifts, as he sees may be best for them. Therefore, to end all in the words of the same apostle, lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

SERMON XLI.

By BISHOP WILSON.

The eighth Commandment.

Exod. xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

As the former commandment requires chastity in our persons, so this does honesty and uprightness in our dealings; a virtue immediately founded on that first practical principle of all human converse, which our Saviour lays down, *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*: and recommends it to us, as the sum and epitome of all the scriptures; for this is the law and the prophets. A principle that carries such innate light and clear evidence in itself, that the very heathens frequently inculcate it in their writings as the primary dictate of that morality which they taught. This is a maxim we assent to, not by any elaborate instructions, dint of arguments, or long train of consequences; but it masters our understandings by its native evidence, and springs up in us as an unpremeditated resolve of reason. Both God and nature have set up this standard in our consciences: and usually there needs no other judge of our actions towards others, than by comparing them with what, in the like cases, we would think just and fit to be done to us. It may be, we are all partial to ourselves in our present concerns: and whilst we only look that way, we may possibly

seek all advantages to promote them, though to another's detriment. But reason and religion will teach us to put ourselves in their stead, and then to manage our transactions with them, as we should judge just and reasonable, were we in their condition; and therefore when we deal with others, we should first act to ourselves both parties. For instance, a servant should consider what respect he would require, was he in the same circumstances with his master, and had servants under him. Children should consider what duty and obedience they would expect, were they parents of children. Subjects, what honour and submission they might reasonably demand, were they magistrates; and so in any other relation: and when they have thus seriously pondered it in their own thoughts, let them then perform the same duties to others, in their real condition, as they judge to belong to them in that which was only imagined. For it is a never-failing rule to direct our practice, that what we judge due to us, were we in another man's condition, is certainly as due to him in his own; and if we do not so act, we betray a great deal of selfishness and sinful partiality. This is a rule applicable to all affairs; and there is scarce any one occurrence of a man's life but he may regulate himself according to this direction; and, indeed, there scarce needs any other. Whatsoever then we have to transact with another, though perhaps we might take such advantages of him, as possibly he might never know, or be able to redress; yet let us seriously ask our consciences, if we could be content, and think it honest and just, to be so used ourselves; and if not, whatsoever the temptation be, either of gain, pleasure, or profit, let us reject it with scorn, as that which would make us violate the first principle of common honesty among men, and contradict the laws both of nature and scripture. Was this rule more generally observed among men, the world would not have that cause to complain of rapine, extortion, oppression, fraud, and injustice, as it now hath. The rich would not grind the face of the poor, nor the poor unjustly clamour against the rich. Superiors would not tyrannize over their inferiors,

nor inferiors murmur or rebel against their superiors; but an equal peace, an uniform justice, would overspread the whole earth; and *righteousness would run down our streets as a mighty stream.* And therefore let me once more recommend it, (for indeed I cannot press it too often,) that we would frequently set this golden rule before us, and do nothing to any other person which, were we in his capacity, we should think unjust to be done unto ourselves: and what-ever we would expect from others, as our due, were we in their place, even that ought we to perform to them, or otherwise we must condemn ourselves. This is a dictate of nature and right reason; the sum of the law and the prophets. And all those various precepts which are given us in scripture, for the conduct of our lives, are but as so many lines that meet in this centre. And if we apply it to each particular command of the second table, we shall find them to be all founded on, and interpreted by this. We are required to honour our superiors, to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, false accusations, and coveting what belongs to another; and all this according to the same measures that we would have others perform these very duties to us. So that self, which is now the great tempter to wrong and injure others, was it governed by this universal maxim, would be the greatest patron of other men's rights and properties. I have the longer insisted on this, it having such general influence on the right ordering of our conversation; and because the most visible apparent violation of this natural law is, by the sin of theft, forbidden in this commandment of which I am treating.

Theft, in general, is an unjust taking, or detaining, what is lawfully another man's. He is a thief who withholds what ought to be in his neighbour's possession, or takes from him what he before possessed; for all theft presupposeth a right and property in another. God is the great Lord and proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein. *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*: by him, and of him, are all things; according to the pleasure of his will they are and were created; and he hath granted unto man a large charter of the world,

of every thing that is good. *The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men.* A large and regal gift, whereby he hath made over unto man all sublunary things, reserving unto himself the sovereignty and supreme lordship of all, and requiring only from man the homage and payment of obedience; and yet this large charter and donation gave no particular propriety unto ~~any~~ ^{any} man continued in his happy and innocent state, there would have been no need of mourning and tum, or any privation of these earthly possessions; but common blessings had been enjoyed in common by all. But sin entering into the world, men's desires after earthly enjoyments grew immoderate, and their attempts to attain them injurious to others; so that it became necessary to prescribe bounds and limits, that each man knowing his assigned portion, might rest satisfied therewith, and be restrained from invading and usurping on the rights of others. And there was no other way to effect this, but by human laws, mutual compact, and agreement, declaring the rights and properties of every man. So that it is law which determines property, and there is nothing ours, or another's, farther than this assigns it to us. Indeed, equity must sometimes interpose to moderate the letter of the law; for in some cases should we rigorously prosecute our right, and insist upon every punctilio we might call our

it would become intolerable, and be a breach and violation of the law of Christ, and of charity, which requires us rather to part with our own in small matter, than to be vexatious or contentious. Thus you see how all right and property first came into the world. A general right by the donation of God; a particular right, by the sanction of laws, allotting to each man his portion; which to invade or take from him, is injustice, or theft.—But as to theft, there are many kinds thereof. The highest and chiefest is that which is committed against God by sacrilege. Sacrilege is an alienation from God, of whatsoever he hath appropriated to himself, or that is upon good grounds dedicated to the encouragement and maintenance of his honour and service. Indeed, the alienating what hath

been given to superstitious or idolatrous uses cannot be justly branded with sacrilege, for it was not so much given to God, as to ignorance and superstition; and therefore our ancestors have done well and piously, in dissolving those nests of unclean birds, the monasteries, that were so numerous and burthensome in these kingdoms. But where any thing is indeed consecrated to God, and set apart for the maintenance and encouragement of his worship and service, it is no less than sacrilege and robbing of God to alienate any part of this to secular uses. And of this God himself grievously complains, *will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? in tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.* Certainly those things which are appointed for the worship and service of God, whether originally by divine right or not, yet they cannot be alienated, or detained without involving the persons, or the nation who doth it, in a great sin; for this is to rob God of his right. Again,

Theft may be committed against men, by an unjust seizure, or detention, of what belongs to them; and this may be done, either by fraud or force; and therefore our Saviour in reciting the commandments mentions them both, *do not steal, defraud not.* This is a sin that God hath threatened with many severe curses and punishments. The temporal punishments, which the scripture pronounces, is an ample and sufficient restitution; and therefore Zaccheus, when he was converted, offers a four-fold restitution to those he had wronged. *If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* And yet besides this restitution, sometimes the offenders were put to death, especially if to their theft they added cruelty and oppression. This appears in the parable of Nathan, when he had most artificially aggravated the rich man's crime in taking away the poor man's lamb, he so raised David's compassion and indignation, that he pronounces this sentence; *the man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.*

So that under the law of Moses it was in some cases lawful to punish a thief with death; though, usually, restitution was only required. Indeed our law condemns them to death; and yet we see how many persist in this wicked course of life notwithstanding that severe punishment: and if the fear of death will not deter them, that of restitution would be much less effectual. But besides the punishment of the law, God leaves a curse upon what is gotten by theft and deceit; a curse that will blast and consume all such wicked increase. Luxury and intemperance usually devour what is got by rapine; God by his righteous judgment making one sin the vengeance of another. And therefore, saith the wise man, *the robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; and, as the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.* God many times raises up such against them as will make them refund their ill-gotten treasure. Thus God threatened the Chaldeans, *because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee.* Such unjust acquisitions tend only to treasure up for themselves and their posterity want and poverty. And therefore if we desire to prosper in the world, and to have our substance increase and multiply, we must be sure that no gain of robbery or oppression, fraud or deceit, be found in our hands, for this will devour our lawful acquisitions.

Besides, great anxiety of mind doth always accompany ill-gotten wealth. It is a sin so much against the light of nature, that conscience, if not totally hardened, will be for ever tormenting them with uneasy thoughts and reflections; for the fear of detection, of shame, and punishment incident thereto, must needs be a continual misery to them. But what is acquired fairly and with a good conscience, by an honest and lawful calling, whether more or less, it brings this contentment with it, that a man may quietly sit down and rejoice in that portion which the providence and bounty of God, his most gracious and heavenly father, hath offered him. He drinks no

widow's tears, nor orphan's blood; he eats not the flesh of the poor, nor breaks the bones of the needy; his conscience checks him not when feeding on what his honest labour and industry hath procured; and though it be but a bit of bread, or cup of cold water, yet is he entertained at a continual feast. And what he eats is far more savoury to him, than all the heightened delicacies of rich oppressors. Therefore better is a *little with righteousness, than great revenues without right. For a little that a righteous man hath, is better than riches of many wicked.* Robbery and deceit also provoke God to cut such men off, by some untimely stroke, and immature judgment; either by the hand of human justice with shame and reproach, or of divine justice with wrath and vengeance. For so it is threatened, *Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* That is, they shall not live to that period which the course and strength of nature would otherwise permit; but the hand of God will cut them off in the midst of their vigour and flourishing years. But however it may be with some of them in this life, if they escape the reproach of men, and the sword of justice, yet they shall certainly be eternally miserable. Their ill-gotten goods shall not be able to redeem their souls, to bribe the justice of God, or to obtain the least solace and comfort. And what wretched fools are they, who must everlastingly perish, for gaining of things that are perishable. *Not thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* Where then shall their portion be but in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, that is unquenchable? where the Lord will spoil their very souls, as the wise man's expression is; *rob not the poor, for the Lord will plead their cause, and will spoil the souls of those that spoiled them.* And thus you see the various ways that God hath threatened to punish this first and greatest kind of theft, of taking away the right of another.

. Another kind of theft, is oppression and unreasonable exaction; taking advantage either of the weakness or neces-

sity of others, and imposing such unequal conditions upon them as they cannot bear, without their detriment and ruin. Contrary to the express words of God, *if thou sell aught unto thy neighbour, or buyest aught at thy neighbour's hands, ye shall not oppress one another.* Thus those who let out money at an extravagant interest, or rigidly exact it from insufficient persons; also the great, who force the meaner sort into disadvantageous bargains, and make them, through fear, to sell at an under-price; these, and the like, though not condemned by human law, are yet guilty by the law of God, of no less sin than oppression, a sin hateful both to God and man. The prophet calls it, *a plucking off their skin from them, and their flesh from their bones, and chopping them in pieces, as for the pot.* All unmercifulness and hard dealings with others is a kind of theft. For the law of nature, and much more the law of charity, obliges us so to deal with others, as not to give them cause to complain of us to God; and in the bitterness of their spirits to imprecate on us the severity of his wrath and vengeance.

Again, To detain from others what is their due, either by equity or compact, is another kind of theft. How many are there whose profuse riot and luxury are maintained at the expence of the poor creditor's ruin; who often have no other satisfaction than good words, and scarce any thing to live on but tears and sighs? How many withhold the hire of poor labourers, who, when wearied out in service, cannot receive for necessary refreshment that small reward which his labours, with the toil and sweat of his own brows, required and earned. *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it. For he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.* And in all our bargains and agreements we are bound to perform them, though never so much to our prejudice, unless the other party will release the contract. For this is one character of a good man, *he that sweareth, and covenanteth to his own hurt, and changeth not; but upon demand is ready*

and willing to perform and execute his agreement.

Another kind of theft is, in buying and selling; and this is of a very large extent: for the subtlety of man hath found out so many artifices to defraud and over-reach others, that to recount them, is almost as difficult as to escape them. Such are the false weights and measures, that are an abomination to the Lord; also false and counterfeited wares, over-commending, or undervaluing of goods for advantage, and many other unjust contrivances, which men's consciences better know than another can suggest. The apostle hath sufficiently cautioned and threatened such men; *let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter, because the Lord is an avenger of such.* There is a day coming when the false weights shall be weighed, and the scanty measures measured, by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly we may deal so craftily, that those whom we over-reach can take no advantage against us to right themselves by law; but we should remember, that the Great Judge will at the last day avenge them upon us. Then all accounts shall be balanced, and what remains shall be certainly paid; though not to the injured, yet to the justice of God, who is the great and universal creditor. Thus we have seen what the negative part of this command is, as to many particular instances thereof; others I could have mentioned had time permitted; and since every negative implies a positive, I shall now proceed to consider what is the duty required from us. Which is, first, That all of us should have some calling. Secondly, That we should be contented with that state and condition of life in which providence has fixed us.

First, *Thou shalt not steal*; therefore every man ought to have a calling, whereon he may comfortably subsist, and by his labour and industry, at least provide necessaries for himself and family. *He that provideth not for his family hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* Some there are who live without calling, such are like idle drones, that consume the labour of others; lazy vagabonds, to whom the greatest charity would be correction; who only serve to

devour misplaced alms, and defraud the truly poor of relief. And we may rank with these some others who are neither serviceable to God nor their country; who have nothing of true worth in them, being the most unprofitable members of the commonwealth, and only live to kill and destroy one another in their drunken quarrels. It is certain, that those whom God hath liberally endowed with his earthly blessings have no necessity for manual employments and labour; but yet they may within their own sphere find business enough to employ their time and thoughts, so as to render them the most beneficial men on earth, and make them to be loved and honoured by others; for by their authority and example, by the largeness of their income and revenues, and the dependance that others have on them, they might be as influential to promote goodness and virtue, as too often they are to countenance and encourage vice. But as some have not employment, so others have an unlawful one, whose only business is to teach and inculcate vice, and excite men to it. And how many such are there are, who live by encouraging of wickedness in others, who are continually making use of all allurements to entice unto evil, recommending debauchery first to the fancy, then to the will and affections?

There are others who indeed have a lawful and honest calling, but then they are negligent and slothful; and which tends to poverty. *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall poverty come as one that travelleth; drawing nearer by soft and silent degrees.* Poverty also tempts to theft, as Solomon says, *lest I am poor and steal.* And therefore this command, which forbids theft, must by consequence enjoin labour and industry in our lawful callings. According to the apostle, *let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth;* and so by industry, of a thief he may become a benefactor and alms-giver. And as this commandment requires that we should be employed in some calling; so it,

Secondly, enjoins us contentment with

that portion of earthly good things, which our heavenly father allots us. *Be content with those things ye have.* And certainly he that is not content with what God allows him, lies under a great temptation, by fraudulent and unjust courses, to carve out his own condition to himself, and invade the rights and properties of others. Discontent and covetousness are the root of all injustice. He that thinks himself injured, because he enjoys not so much as others, will be apt, either through fraud or violence, to increase his substance by taking from his neighbour. Let us therefore in time check this repining temper, and be satisfied with that provision which God hath afforded us: and though it be not the most delicate, or the most sumptuous, *yet having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Let us look upon all other things as superfluous or indifferent; and not murmur though we should never attain them. For whatsoever is necessary to our subsistence, God's providence and blessing on our industry will supply us with; and we ought not to repine for not having what we do not absolutely want.

I shall conclude this discourse by an exhortation to those who are conscious to themselves of having wronged others. Let then such know, that they are in duty bound to restore the thing stolen or purloined, if it be in their power; if not, restitution must be made another way, by an adequate, ample, and satisfactory compensation; it not being enough to confess the sin to God, and beg his pardon; but restitution of the thing, or recompence for it, with the damage sustained, must also be made and rendered, without which pardon and remission of the guilt from God can never be expected. And the reason is, because as long as any detains another's right and property, such continues in the same sin; for unjust possession is a continued and prolonged theft. And certainly that repentance of any sin, can never be true or sincere, of which, though we seem to repent, yet we continue in. And without a true repentance, how can God's pardon be expected? But perhaps some will say, what if those we have defrauded are dead, how can restitution be then made them? To which I answer, in such case we are

bound to make satisfaction to their children or representatives; and if there are none to be found, then we ought to dispose of it in acts of charity and piety. Some possibly may think this a very hard lesson of instruction, yet this is the rule of christianity, the inflexible laws of justice, and without complying therewith, we have no reasonable hopes of obtaining God's pardon. For which may we all fit and prepare ourselves.

S E R M O N XLVI.

By Dr. HOLE.

The ninth Commandment.

Exod. xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

As the former commandment is intended to defend our properties from wrong and violence, so this is designed to preserve our good name from slander and defamation; a good name is so excellent and valuable a thing, that the very subsistence of some, the conveniency and happiness of all, do much depend thereon. The wise man tells us, *it is rather to be chosen than great riches*; indeed the one without the other will afford but little comfort. And elsewhere he says, *a good name is better than precious ointment*; for it yields a sweet savour to all about us, it perfumes the air we breathe in, scatters its fragrancy abroad, and transmits the odour to posterity. And as a good name is in itself highly desirable, so is it a very tender thing, easily wounded, and sometimes incurable; for which reason this commandment was given to secure it from all unjust assaults. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* This precept being negative, I shall first consider what is therein forbidden, which in general are all the ways of injuring the credit and reputation of our neighbour, either publicly or privately; as

By bringing a false accusation, or giving a false testimony against any in courts of judicature; which is wounding of men's good name within the very letter of this commandment. This may be done, ei-

ther by charging any person with what they know to be false; as that of Potiphar's wife, who charged Joseph with incontinence, when she knew to the contrary; such also were they who falsely accused our Saviour as an enemy to Cæsar, and his apostles as troublers of the world, and turning it upside down. This crime, however common, is a work of the devil, and those who practise it are the children of that wicked one. Again, bearing of false witness may be done, by concealing something that is true, whereby great injury may happen to men; or by affirming a thing with a higher degree of assurance than our knowledge extends to. In the first case, he that kills another, in his own defence, or in the execution of justice, may be condemned as a murderer, if those alleviating circumstances are not brought to light: and in the other, he that attests a thing as certain, which he believes to be only probable, gives a false testimony, because what he asserts or swears to, may, for aught he knows, be otherwise. So that in either case, he that thus swears, is guilty of bearing false witness.

Another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour is, that of lying; a vile practice, against which we have many express texts of scripture: as, *lie not one to another, put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour*. The evil of lying is very apparent; for it perverts the end of speech, which is freely and fairly to communicate our minds to each other. It robs our neighbour of that debt of truth which is due to all men, and makes the tongue, which was given for the glory of God and the good of one another, to become the instrument of deceit and dishonour to both. And therefore our Saviour tells us, *that lying is of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it*; and they who delight therein, shall have their portion with him, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Slandering is another instance of bearing false witness against our neighbour. And this consists in raising or spreading false reports of him, to the prejudice of his fame and character. This is too common a fault among men, who whet their tongue like a sword, which cuts as a sharp

razor wounding the reputation of others, without consideration or remorse. And this is done, sometimes, by fixing black and infamous characters on men, to their prejudice and great detriment. We find our Saviour himself could not escape the lashes of slandering tongues, for he was branded with characters the most infamous; an impostor, a blasphemer, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: and his apostles were stiled, seditious, and troublers of the world: and among ourselves, how often do we hear the odious titles of proud, covetous, malicious, and the like invidious epithets, fixed on persons deserving a better character?

Detraction is another crime condemned by this commandment. Detraction differs from slander in this, that the latter is a wrongful imputation of some vice; the other is a wilful lessening of another's virtue. The one consists in a charge of evil on our neighbour; the other, in undervaluing and obscuring the good he does. This of detraction is a fault no less frequent than injurious. When the merits of any person shine forth with a brighter lustre than others, many are busy to cast a cloud on them, and sully the glory of his best actions. A detractor loves to find flaws and blemishes in the best things, and to derogate from the praise of the most worthy. He is uneasy under the commendation of others; thinking it lessens his own worth, and therefore seeks to raise fame on the ruin of others; by diminishing the good, aggravating the evil, blaming the principles, disparaging and perverting his best actions, and most innocent designs. But this is directly opposite to that part of charity which we call candour and ingenuity, for that inclines men to commend the virtues and good qualities of others, giving every thing its due weight; and instead of disclosing, will hide a multitude of sins; charity gives all persons and actions their just praise; and so far from speaking, it thinketh no evil.

Flattery is another way of bearing false witness against our neighbour; and this differs from the former, in that as the detractor takes off from another's worth, the flatterer adds too much to it, and so hurts his credit as much in the excess, as

the other diminishes from it. The flatterer represents persons and things otherwise than they are, extolling some too high, and giving greater characters of them than they deserve. There are some who will celebrate such virtues in another, which they know is not in them; and others, who if they see one guilty of a vice, will conceal that and commend him for the contrary virtue, calling *evil good, and good evil, light darkness, and darkness light*, from whence have proceeded many notorious evils.

All judging and censuring of others, scoffing at, and exposing them to contempt are here condemned, as bearing false witness against our neighbour. We are commanded to *judge not, lest we are judged*; and Solomon tells us, *he that mocketh his neighbour is void of understanding*; that is, he doth not well consider the damage and detriment he thereby does him: for this is many times a great prejudice to the name, and also to the quiet and interest of another. These are the more open and public ways of hurting the credit of our neighbour, and are here forbidden, as bearing false witness against him. Besides these, there are other more secret and private ways of wounding another's reputation, that fall under the prohibition of this commandment; as back-biting, whispering, and tale-bearing; and which, though less observed, are by no means the less injurious; nay are oftentimes the more dangerous, by not being seen and discerned before they have done incurable evils. These sort of evil-speakers work like moles under ground; and as men may suffer more by the invisible hollowness of an earthquake than the loudest blusters of a storm, so the credit of our neighbour may receive deeper wounds by the invisible darts of secret calumnies, than by the bolder strokes of open and public slanders.

Back-biting is the speaking evil of another behind his back, by which many have greatly suffered; an enemy that comes behind and unawares, being far more dangerous than a known and declared one. Against the latter we may arm and defend ourselves, but the other attacks us cowardly when we are ignorant of his designs. And therefore we find the back-biter in the black list of the greatest

sinners, and numbered with those who are to be excluded the kingdom of heaven. Whereas a good man is described to be one who backbiteth not his neighbour; and is thereby fitted to ascend the holy hill.

Whispering is that sort of back-biting that consists in relating men's failings in private. This is an artificial and very malicious way of defaming, and many times makes greater impressions than more open calumnies: for he that is intrusted with this secret generally obliges another with it, and so it is communicated to others, till it creeps about like infection, and leaves the party's reputation wounded beyond redress. These also are in the catalogue of such as are given up to a reprobate mind, and who without repentance shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Tale-bearing is somewhat a more open way of defaming, and signifies the telling tales of others as a piece of news, and to find matter of talk, which is often done to the great prejudice of men's good name; and therefore God Almighty gave an express charge against it, *thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the people*. The word in the original signifies a trader in ill reports and stories of other men. This is what the Psalmist condemns in some, *who sit and speak against their brother and slander their own mother's son; whose words are as swords, and wound even to the innermost parts of the belly*. These, besides the evil they do to men's good name, destroy the peace and quiet of the whole neighbourhood; for a tale-bearer stirreth up strife, and separateth very friends.

Thus we see what is forbidden in this commandment, namely, all manner of evil-speaking, both open and secret, public or private, to the prejudice of the fame and reputation of another, which is in some respect to bear false witness against one's neighbour. But because all the motives and occasions of this evil are forbidden with it, therefore the apostle commands us *to lay aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envyings, and all evil-speakings*. To lay aside all malice, which whets the tongue against one another; all guile, which tips it with falsehood and dissimulation; all

hypocrisy, in disparaging or flattering of others; all envyings, which sour men's minds and corrupt their discourses; all evil-speakings, which breeds the poison of asps under their lips: in a word, let us lay aside all pride, self-interest, evil-speaking, faction, and whatever may tend to slander and defamation. I now proceed to consider what duties are required of us in this commandment. And first,

We are to preserve the honour and good name of our neighbour. This is what St. Peter means when he commands us to *honour all men*; that is, we are to be so tender of the honour or reputation of every one, as instead of impairing, to do all we can to preserve and advance it. And this honour and esteem for all, is founded on some excellency common to mankind; who have all the image of God stamp'd upon them, and should therefore, in reason, have a suitable regard paid even to the meanest person: for though some are in a more exalted station, and whose greater parts and power may demand higher degrees of it, yet some measure of honour and respect is due to that common nature of whom all are partakers; and that is to have a tender regard for the good name of every one, and to preserve all men as far as we can from reproach and contempt; for as the wise man says, he that mocketh or despiseth the poorest man, despises his Maker. It is a contempt of God to debase or vilify such as bear his image, and we debase ourselves in abusing those who are so nearly allied to us by an affinity of nature; whom we ought to honour and esteem for God's sake, and to love them for our own. We should be as tender of their character and reputation as those of ourselves. If we see a man suffer under a slander which we know to be false, we are obliged to appear in his defence, to assert and vindicate his abused innocence, and to the best of our power remove such unjust aspersions. This is implied in not bearing false witness, and is a part of justice we owe to the reputation of all men.

But further: This commandment requires truth in our words and promises; for the not bearing false witness, signifies our bearing true witness, which we

are to regard in all our speeches; for a good man is one who speaketh the truth from his heart. This should be observed in public courts of justice, and in all private commerce and conversation. In courts of justice, when we are summoned to bear witness for or against any, we must speak the truth from our hearts. This is a matter of great consequence to the lives and fortunes of men, on which the safety and security of both do very much depend: and therefore the oath administered on such occasions is, that men should speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The truth, without forging or falsifying any matter which perverts judgment and justice: the whole truth, without concealing any part out of favour or prejudice to either party, which prevents justice from being rightly administered, and may occasion much wrong: nothing but the truth; without adding any doubtful and uncertain conjectures whereby a jury may be induced to give a hard and injurious sentence. These are the properties of a good witness, upon whose testimony men's lives and estates depend. A faithful witness will not lie, or forge anything; but a false witness will utter lies. And, *he that speaketh truth, sheweth forth righteousness, but a false witness deceit.* All who are required to give evidence in any cause, should be careful to confine their testimony to such things only as they know to be true. For it is this that preserves the public peace and welfare, prevents injustice and wrong, and secures to us quiet and tranquillity of mind, and whereby we also promote God's glory. Joshua bids Achan *give glory to God by speaking the truth, in the matter of the wedge of gold.* By speaking the truth we glorify and reverence God's attributes, and conform to his nature and will, who is truth itself, and requires truth in the inward parts; but we highly dishonour him, by bearing false witness, because we thereby disown all love and fear of him.

Moreover, as this commandment requires truth in courts of justice, so does it in all our conversation and commerce with each other; we being enjoined to *speak every man truth with his neighbour.* In all private converse our Saviour's ad-

vice is, *that our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay*; that is, to affirm or deny nothing contrary to the truth, but to declare things as they are, without falsifying or forswearing. For these are of the evil one, who was a liar from the beginning, and the father of them; but God is truth, and his servants are styled children that will not lie, who have a veneration for truth in all their words and actions. Truth is too sacred a thing to be prostituted, or trifled with; it being the cement and safeguard of all society, and what ought to be inviolably observed in all our communications with one another; more especially in our promises and contracts, where our words should correspond with our thoughts, and be agreeable to our purposes and resolutions performing such agreements as we have made. It is such a serious regard to truth that can only answer the end of speech, which was given as a means to convey our mind and meaning, and to be the instrument of intercourse and mutual confidence between each other. So that he who useth his tongue to the speaking truth, employs it as God hath appointed; but a liar contradicts and inverts the design of speech, by making his tongue instrumental to promote and propagate falsehood, deceit, and slander. Indeed, truth is what all men owe to one another; and whoever falsifies or equivocates with his neighbour, does an act of great injustice, by depriving him of that right of truth which God hath made due to every man; and he most notoriously bears false witness who speaks one thing, and intends another. And therefore,

Another virtue required in this commandment, is an honest simplicity in all our words and actions. By this the heart will be void of all evil purposes and designs, and possessed only with just sentiments and strong desires of doing good. He that inwardly designs to hurt and injure another, generally disguises his intentions by outward fair speech, and so conceals the wickedness of his heart by the flattery and falsehood of his tongue; but he that hath goodly wishes for others, his tongue will not vary either, his heart, nor his actions from intent will

be found in both; even that simplicity and godly sincerity, in which all men are directed to have their conversation.

But this simplicity consists in several particulars; namely, in a freedom from all malice, which is the vilest of all passions, stiled therefore not only wickedness itself; for malice is but compounded of anger and hatred, more dangerous than both. It is a subtle, and mischievous passion, the craft of the fox mixed with the art of the tiger. It fills the heart with gall, tips the tongue with falsehood, as Solomon says, *will not suffer men to sleep till they have done evil*. But an honest simplicity of mind is directed to this it desires all good, and intends no evil, to his neighbour; it retains the meekness of the serpent, and yet will not harm the dove, and is called by many names. And any, in body, goods, or name. And the simplicity here required is to be free from all guile, hypocrisy, and dissimulation. Such things put false colours upon men's words and actions, make them appear to be what they are not, and set them upon using disguise. They that have to carry on the dearest measures, speak one way and act another, profess the greatest respect, when by fair speeches palliate dangerous actions. David complained the foulest of his enemies, were those who that his greatest friendship. Says he, *pretended an open enemy that did me this it was not, but my companion and my own dishonour friend; they that eat of my familiar bread wait for me. Judas came to betray his saviour with, hail, master! and he betrayed him at the same time he betrayed his*. And St. Paul was in great perils by his false brethren, who spake him fair, when they designed him the greatest mischief. This is but too much practised in our days, wherein the ancient simplicity of our forefathers is in a great measure lost, and men are degenerated into craft and subtlety, lay snares in their discourse, and traps in their ways and dealings; directly contrary to the simplicity required in this commandment, by which we are not only forbidden to bear any false witness, but are enjoined to have our speeches agree with our minds

and our actions to bear a true testimony to our words, to lay aside all guile and hypocrisy. Lastly, The simplicity here required implies a freedom from all envy, invidious and evil speaking. Envy sours men's minds, and embitters their tongue: ill-will never speaks well, but aggravates all miscarriages; and therefore to cure these vices of the tongue, we must discard all spite and envy from our minds, so prejudicial to the good name of our neighbours, and learn that charity, which envieth not, and will not suffer us to think or speak amiss of any.

Thus will we see what is forbidden, and what required in this commandment; to the former belong all the wicked arts of impairing or hurting our neighbour's credit; to the latter appertain all the good and christian methods of promoting and preserving his reputation. For the better observing of our duty herein, it will not be amiss to recommend the advice of St. Paul, *study to be quiet, and do your own business*. Now, study implies an earnest attention of mind, accompanied with diligent inquiry and endeavours after something; and the apostle making quietness a matter of study, shews the excellency of it, and that it is worth studying to attain it. That it is worth our study, the many benefits we reap from peace, and the various miseries that flow from contention, may easily satisfy us. And if we would preserve each other's good name, let us mind our own business, and not intermeddle with other men's; for they who thrust themselves into other people's concerns, generally make bold with their reputation, assuming all wisdom to themselves, and scarce allowing others enough to understand or manage their own affairs. Hence the apostle joins busy-bodies and tattlers together; adding, *that they wander about from house to house not only idle, but tattlers, and speaking what they ought not*. To conclude then this commandment, we are here directed to avoid all unjust ways of lessening or detracting from the honour or reputation of our neighbour, which is bearing false witness against him; and likewise to do all the right and service we lawfully can to his good name, which is bearing true testimony to and for him.

SERMON XLVII.

By Dr. HOLE.

The Tenth Commandment.

EXOD. xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

THESE words contain the tenth and last commandment in the decalogue: the design whereof is to regulate the inward thoughts and desires of the heart, and to keep them from all unlawful lustings or coveting what is another's. The former precepts expressly relate to the outward man, restraining the external acts of violence and injustice; but this extends to the inward man, putting a check to all secret unlawful desires, though they never come into act, and refining the heart, which is the spring of all evil, from all unjust inclinations; for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. Indeed, all the laws of God are spiritual, for they reach and affect the heart; and therefore our Saviour in expounding the commandments declares, that all internal motions to sin are prohibited, as well as the outward acts.

God in this commandment expressly arraigns the thoughts, and condemns the very intention of our hearts, towards what is evil; *thou shalt not covet*. He requires us not to deprive our neighbour of his right, nor even to wish or desire it; and to abstain, not only from all unjust actions, but from all covetous inclinations. For this law forbids the sin of covetousness, or an inordinate lusting after, or desiring what belongs to another. There may be an honest and regular desire of others' goods, when confined to just and lawful means of obtaining it; since without this, there can be no traffick or commerce. None will buy or purchase any thing of another, unless he has a mind thereto; trade and commerce depend on the liking and desiring one another's goods. But then there are besides irregu-

lar desires, whereby men covet the goods of others, and would unjustly obtain them; and such are gross violations of this commandment. Some things of our neighbour's cannot lawfully be parted with, others not without great loss, inconveniences, or reluctance; in such cases, to desire our neighbour's goods, is an evil covetousness; and which leads me to consider the several objects of concupiscence mentioned in this command.

We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's house; that is, not only his habitation, but whatever he is rightfully possessed of; these he ought quietly to enjoy, without any secret wishes or desires of ours after them. It was Ahab's sin to covet Naboth's vineyard; and we shall be as guilty to covet our neighbour's house, or farm, unless in an honest way, when the owner is willing legally to part with them, on terms that are just and right. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's wife, because this should not be; *for whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.* No consent of parties can dissolve the bonds of wedlock, or violate the laws of chastity; and therefore all such desires must be sinful; for they being made one by mutual agreement and God's institution, their hearts must not stray from each other, nor others run towards them. To covet or withdraw the affection of either is a manifest breach of the laws of God and nature. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's servant, whether man or maid; for these are part of our neighbour's goods, made so by mutual covenant and promise; and by the laws of God and man, he hath a right to their labour and service, which none may lawfully desire or deprive him of. Indeed, a master and servant may lawfully part by consent, or he may remove an idle unfaithful servant, and then they are free to any other; but none may secretly wish for entice, or seduce another's servant, for this is a breach of justice and charity, and creates difference among neighbours. This is to do to another what we should not like to be done to us, and is very contrary to that love and kindness we are forbidden to bear to one another. We are forbidden to covet our neighbour's ox or ass; that is, any of his cattle, flock, or;

these things our neighbour has so just a property as may not be invaded so much as by a wish, for then it possibly would go farther; coveting will lead to pilfering and embezzle; for next to desiring is defrauding: and therefore this commandment checks the first motions and tendencies to such evil; for it calling our not only against robbing and stealing our neighbour's cattle, but forbids all thoughts and desires leading thereto: nay, so far from coveting or hurting him, we are to save and succour them in all their wanderings; for our Saviour's commands, that if our neighbour's ox or ass fall into a pit, we should help him out, and if he goes astray, to bring him home. Lastly, We are forbid to covet any thing that is our neighbour's; the former part of the command relates to things of weight and consequence; and that we might not think ourselves at liberty to desire the smallest matters belonging to our neighbour, it is added, *nor any thing that is his.* Some there are, who will own it unjust and unreasonable to covet another's house, wife, servant or cattle, and yet think a little corn, grass, wood, or apples, such trifles as not to be minded; and so are apt to indulge, not only their hearts in coveting, but also their hands in pilfering of them. But this commandment corrects all such mistakes, by requiring us not to covet any thing that is our neighbour's, he having an equal right to small as well as greater matters; and he that violates God's authority in the one, will soon do it in the other; for the one by using to pilfer in little trifles, many proceeded to things of greater value; have which should make men avoid the beginnings of this vice, and not to meddle with their neighbour's property in the lowest matters. Thus I have shewn the sin forbidden in this commandment.

But it must be remembered, as before observed, that all the motives and inducements to any sin are also prohibited with the sin itself: and we shall find many evils condemned by this law, leading to the great sin of covetousness. As first, discontent with our present condition is forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of coveting; for he that likes not his own circumstances, will covet what he should not; and thinking he

hath not enough, will be ever uneasy and desirous of more. Discontent deprives men of the comfort of what they enjoy : Ahab could take no pleasure in the glory and greatness of a kingdom whilst he coveted Naboth's vineyard ; for he came to his house heavy and displeased, he laid him down on his bed, turned away his face, and would eat no bread. This folly leads men to fraud and injustice. The apostle declares, that they who being uneasy at their present fortunes do covet to be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that draw them in destruction and perdition. Discontent with our condition, says the wise man, frets the heart against the Lord ; as if he dealt hardly with them, and denied to give what they desired or deserved. It makes them find fault with the dispensations of divine providence, as thinking other men's lot better than theirs ; and which leads first to coveting, and then purloining what is another's. Envy is another sin forbidden in this commandment, as an occasion of this evil concupiscence. This is an effect of the former, and naturally leads to covetousness. For he that is discontented with his own condition, will envy others ; and that naturally begets inordinate desires and hankerings after it. This sin offers great indignity to God, for it will not allow him to dispose of his own blessings. The envious person would have things ordered, not by the wisdom of the divine will, but his own fancy and humour : he would be the sole carver of his own and other men's fortunes, and therefore grudges and murmurs if any have more than he thinks proper ; which is a great affront to the wisdom and authority of our Maker. It is also high injustice to our neighbour to covet what is his, and repine at his prosperity, when we ought to rejoice thereat : nor is it a small injury to a man's self, for it destroys the peace and tranquility of his mind, and deprives him of all the comfort he might reap from the prosperity of others ; this envious coveting of another's property, serving only to fret and gall his mind, to weaken his body, and bring leanness and rottenness into his bones. Another occasion of coveting here forbidden is an immoderate care and anxious

solicitude for the things of this life ; for which reason our Saviour gives a strict caution against it ; says he, *take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on : Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?* Not that our Saviour here condemns all prudent moderate care about earthly things, nor requires us to cast off all thoughts and concern for our body ; we being commanded to *provide things honest in the sight of all men, and not to be slothful, but diligent in our business.* But our Saviour's charge is, not to give way to any anxious, perplexing, or solicitous cares about these things ; such as to distrust God's providence, or to put men upon inordinate desires and endeavours after what is not their own ; for these destroy property, disturb the peace and order of the world, violate the laws of God, and bring destruction to the souls of men ; and therefore our Saviour uses many arguments, whereby to cure such carking and immoderate cares.

For he sends us to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, *who sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet our heavenly Father feedeth them ; and are we not much better than they ?* To check all solicitous thoughts about meat and drink, he minds us of the provision made for all inferior creatures ; how he feeds the ravens, and will not suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground ; and can we think he will starve his own children ? To cure all anxious cares about raiment, he sends us to the lilies of the field, *to consider how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet, says he, Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these : and if God so clothe the grass of the field that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe us ?* Lastly, He shews the vanity of all such carking and distrustful cares, which can neither add one cubit to our stature, nor one grain to our estate without God's blessing ; which will sooner be obtained by a devout dependance on his providence, than by all the anxious and indirect arts of our own contrivance. These, together with idleness and pride, are the principal motives and occasions

of that sinful concupiscence condemned in this commandment, which we must carefully watch against, as the enemies of our souls, and the obstacles of our salvation. In a word, let us subdue the first motions of discontent, envy, and ambition, which will otherwise betray us into greater evils; for by suffering our hearts to covet, we let loose our hands to picking and stealing, and shall thereby incur the miseries and punishments both of this life and the next.

Having considered the negative part of this commandment, which forbids all coveting or desiring what belongs to others, I shall now proceed to the affirmative part of it, which instructs us in what is required; namely, contentment with our own condition; according to the apostle, *let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have*. In treating of this great duty, I will shew the nature of contentment; the reasonableness of it; and lastly, propose some directions for attaining it.—Contentment is such a satisfaction of mind in any condition, as to be easy to one's self and others. True contentment springs from the mind; it arises not from the abundance of outward things, which often brings disquiet, but from the inward frame and disposition of the soul, that thankfully enjoys, and prudently acquiesces, in whatever portion is allotted. Therefore St. Paul declares, that *he coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; but had learned to be content with his own estate*. Indeed, with any estate that should happen to him; for he knew how to be abased, as well as how to abound; both to be full and to be hungry, to abound and suffer need. Contentment is such a well-pleasedness with our condition, as to render us easy to ourselves. *The good man*, saith Solomon, *shall be satisfied from himself*. He hath such a spring of joy and peace from within, as keeps him from murmuring and repining, and makes him cheerfully to receive whatever God is pleased to allot him. And the good effect of this virtue not only renders him easy to himself, but to all others; for contentment preserves us from all the evil effects of envy, and makes us rather to rejoice than repine at another's prosperity.

But the reasonableness of this virtue of contentment will more plainly appear; if we consider, that whatever our state and condition may be, yet it is allotted by God, the sovereign disposer of all things, from whose bounty flows all that we receive. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof*, which he bestows on the sons of men as he thinks fit. We are debtors to him for our very being; we are made by his power, and daily supported by his providence for in *him we live, move, and have our being*; so that we ought rather to be contented and thankful for what we have, than murmur and complain for what we want. And as we can claim nothing as our due, neither can we challenge any thing as our desert; for we are less than the least of all God's mercies, and can merit nothing at his hands. We should therefore be content, and receive with gratitude what we have. And if to the sovereign right and title of Almighty God, we add the consideration of his wisdom and goodness, we shall see far greater reason to be content with our portion; for what we have is allotted us by an all-wise and gracious hand, who knows what is better for us than we can do for ourselves. We often wish and long for those things that will do us more harm than good. But God in his wisdom best knows what is proper and fit for us, and dispenses his goodness to us in such proportion, as most tends to promote our welfare; and therefore we ought, in point of interest, as well as conscience, humbly and thankfully to acquiesce in what he orders: for to be dissatisfied with our condition, is, in effect, to prefer our judgment to his, and to think ourselves wiser than God. And to be displeased with his allotment, is the ready way to forfeit our Maker's favour, and provoke him to recall what we have, instead of giving more. Besides, there is a peculiar happiness attending contentment; for a contented mind is always easy: it creates a constant, calm, an undisturbed tranquility within; but discontent and envy disquiet the mind, and raise a perpetual storm in the hearts of men. Content is true happiness, the blest estate of heaven; the joy of glorified saints, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; who are not only pleased with

their own joys and blessedness, but delighted with those of others : but discontent and envy are the passions and torment of wicked spirits, whose own uneasiness, like so many furies, makes them tear and devour one another.

Lastly, I shall prescribe some rules for the better attaining this excellent art of contentment. And as this useful virtue is seated chiefly in the mind, we must begin there, and endeavour to bring our minds to our condition. The reason why so few attain this art is, because they take not the right method. Men are solicitous enough to bring their estates to their minds, which, being too large to be satisfied with earthly things, is a vain attempt; for he that *loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.* But to act rightly, we must labour to bring our minds to our estate, and to rest satisfied with whatever the divine wisdom and goodness allots for us, which better knows what is fit for us, than we can do for ourselves. Again, in order to be content with our condition, we should consider that all earthly things are insufficient to make us happy. Some weakly imagine, that if they could arrive to such an estate, or attain such a degree of honour, dignity, and preferment in this world, they should then be so happy as to be satisfied without seeking or desiring more; and yet when they have obtained their wish, they find their cares and troubles greater, and themselves more uneasy than before; and therefore, Cynæas the philosopher wisely told Pyrrhus, on his informing him of the designs he had on Rome, Sicily, and Carthage, that if he could not be content with his own kingdom, neither would he be satisfied with the whole world. Indeed such things will not satisfy us, for they rather increase than allay the thirst of the soul. So that let the world flow ever so much upon us, our desires will run faster and exceed them. Wherefore it will be our wisdom to fix our affections on higher and better

To learn this lesson of contentment, we must subdue all pride and haughtiness of mind, for he that is highly opinionated will think he hath not what he deserves; this will make him repine, desire more,

and envy others : but he that has humble thoughts of himself, will be thankful and content with any thing. We must also be diligently employed in that business and calling wherein God hath placed us, for that will secure his blessing on our endeavours, and bring us content. *The blessing of God (saith Solomon) maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow with it.* He who hath that, is rich in any condition, and doth not want a competency. It is idleness that occasions want, covetous, and envious thoughts, which industry chases away, and leaves no room for. We must also take care to live within the bounds of our estate; for he that exceeds it, will contract debts that unavoidably lead to danger and discontent. Frugality, temperance, and honesty are excellent helps to contentment, there being a blessing annexed to these things, which brings peace to the mind, and prosperity to our affairs; but extravagancy and dishonesty are ever attended with a curse, which disquiets the mind, diminishes the substance, and lays a foundation for misery and trouble. Again, if we would get and preserve a contented mind, we must more observe those who are below, than such as are above us; for the splendor of greatness is apt to dazzle the eye, to create envy and discontent. He that too much admires the wealth, honour, and power of another, will be easily induced to envy their happiness, and be discontented with his own condition; but if he looks below him, and considers how many want what he enjoys, this will teach him to be content and thankful for his own allotment. Nature is content with a little: he that lives by the necessities of nature is easily supplied; but he that feeds a carnal and sensual appetite, multiplies his wants, and makes artificial necessities, which drive away contentment. Lastly, To acquire the grace of contentment, we must learn to fix our trust and dependence on God, who hath promised never to leave nor forsake us. He alone is able to satisfy the cravings of our souls, to supply the wants and necessities of our bodies. All other things leave us when we most need them; they are of no use in time of sickness, the hour of death, or day of judgment; and therefore, let us not trust in uncertain

riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Thus I have shewn what is required and forbidden in this and the other commandments; and the wise man's conclusion of the whole matter is, *fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*; and which our Saviour hath comprised in the love of God and our neighbour.

The fear of God will restrain us from *having any other Gods besides, or before him*; which is the first commandment. He that hath this holy awe and reverence for the divine majesty, will dread to offend him; either by the guilt of atheism, idolatry, or worshipping any rival deities. The sense of his power and greatness, as our Lord and Master, will make us to honour and serve him only. The fear of God will keep us from worshipping him contrary to his word and will, as by images or pictures, which is the thing forbidden in the second commandment. He that truly fears God, will not worship the creature instead of the Creator, much less give his glory to graven images. The sense of God's jealousy of a rival, and the vengeance he hath denounced against such and their posterity, should teach us to worship God, as he hath commanded, in spirit and in truth. The fear of God will keep men from profaning his sacred name, and beget a veneration for it, which is the substance of the third commandment. The want of this holy fear and reverence is what makes men venture so boldly to take God's name in vain, by rash and false swearing; to invade his property by sacrilege, to despise his ministers, and detain their maintenance from them; to pollute his sanctuary by profaneness, and to think meanly of persons, places, and things, dedicated to his name: but did we stand in awe of God as we ought, we should not dare to sin thus against him. Did we truly believe, *the Lord will not hold them guiltless that thus take his name in vain*, we should more honour his holy name, and avoid detracting from it. Lastly, The fear of God will make us remember to keep holy the sabbath-day, and to have a due regard to the times set apart and devoted to his service, which is required by the fourth commandment. If we fear

God, we shall not profane those days by working at our calling, much less by following the works of sin; but rather conscientiously rest from all our labours, the better to attend God's worship, and the exercises of religion: especially considering the liberal allowance God hath given us, of six days in the week for our use, and reserving only one in seven for his own service. And surely he that hath any fear of God, or honour for him, will be afraid and ashamed to deny him this. Thus we see how the fear of God runs through the first table of the law, and at once comprizes and enforces the duties we owe to God.

The next thing to be considered is, the duties we owe our neighbour, contained in the commandments of the second table, which are only performed by keeping of them. By observing the fifth commandment, we discharge our duty to all our superiors; which is to honour our parents, both natural and civil, and to obey those that are set over us in church and state; to which we are encouraged by the promise of long life here, and eternal Bliss hereafter. By keeping the sixth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to one another's lives, and the body and soul of both; which is to take the best care we can of the health, safety, and welfare of each, and avoid maiming, murdering, and destroying of either. By observing the seventh commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to our neighbour's wife; we abstain from all uncleanness in thought, word, and deed; and keep our vessels in sanctification and honour; we preserve a pure and inviolable chastity, and are thereby true to our marriage vows and promises. By observing the eighth commandment, we perform the duty we owe to our neighbour's goods and substance; which is not to steal, take away, or withhold his right from him; and not to over-reach him by any methods of fraud or deceit, nor lessen his substance by robbery or oppression; but to use our best endeavours to preserve, promote, and advance his prosperity. By keeping the ninth commandment, we discharge the duty we owe to the credit and good name of our neighbour; which is, not to blast it, by bearing false witness, lying, slander, and detraction.

nor to undermine it by secret whispering, tale-bearing, and backbiting: but as much as possible to silence all vilifying and detracting language of other men: to vindicate every one from unjust aspersions, and endeavour to preserve the reputation of others. Lastly, By the tenth commandment we are restrained from all unjust covetous desires, and from indirectly obtaining what belongs to our neighbours; and are thereby taught to be content with what is truly and honestly ours, and willing that all others should also enjoy what is their right and property. Thus, as our duty to God is included in the fear of him, so our duty to our neighbour is contained in keeping the commandments; which two things are so full and comprehensive that the wise man calls them, *the whole of man*.

For this is the whole duty, end, and happiness of man. This is the whole work and business incumbent on man, and about which we are to employ ourselves in this world; not that we are to neglect the duties of our calling, and to have our minds always on religion; but that we must make it our main and chief business, and prefer it above all other. *To fear God, and keep his commandments*, is a matter of universal concern to all men, none are exempted; this being the whole duty or principal business that belongs to every man. This is the end of man; for God gave him faculties above other creatures, that he should honour, fear, and obey him. He is not distinguished from brute beasts so much by reason, as by religion and the fear of God; so that this is the whole essence and end of man: and to fear God and keep his commandments will qualify and prepare us for happiness, and secure to us our future bliss. It will raise our natures to their highest perfection, and conform us to the divine nature, which nothing but the practice of religion and virtue can do. So that this is the whole work and business, the end and design, the interest and happiness, of man; all which are so many powerful arguments to persuade us to the practice of it.

From what hath been said, let us learn to live always in the fear of God, and that will keep us to our duty: let us *meditate on the infinite power of*

God, which is able to punish all offences, for if we set him always before us, we shall never do evil: let us not fear men whose power can reach no farther than the body or goods, but fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell: let us consider and reflect on his impartial justice, and frequently have in remembrance his infinite mercy, that we may fear the Lord for his *name*; and dread to offend his justice: let us live in constant obedience to his commands, then shall we perform our duty to our neighbour, and thereby keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man. For what doth the Lord our God require of us, but to fear and serve him, to walk in his ways, and keep his commandments? for this is the whole of man; always remembering that God will bring every work to judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.

SERMON XLVIII.

By BISHOP HORSLEY.

The Observance of the Sabbath.

MARK, ii. 27.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

THE two opposite characters of the hypocrite and the profane are in no part of their conduct more conspicuously distinguished, than by the opposite errors which they seem to adopt concerning the degree of attention due to the positive institutions of religion, whether of human or Divine appointment. Under the name of positive institutions, we comprehend all those impositions and restraints, which not being suggested to any man by his conscience, and having no necessary and natural connexion with the dictates of that internal monitor, seem to have no importance but what they may derive from the will of a superior who prescribes them. Of this sort, as far as we at present understand it, was the restriction laid upon our first parents in paradise—the prohibition of the use of blood for food, after the deluge—the

rite of circumcision in Abraham's family—the whole of the Mosaic ritual—the sacraments of the Christian church—the institution of the Sabbath—and, besides these, all ceremonies of worship whatsoever of human appointment. All these things come under the notion of positive institutions; for although the expediency of things of the kind, in the several successive ages of the world, is sufficiently apparent, yet the particular merit of the special acts enjoined, for which they might be preferable to other acts which might have been devised for the same purpose, is perhaps in none of the instances alleged very easy to be discovered. That men should assemble at stated seasons for the public worship of God, all must perceive to be a duty who acknowledge that a creature endowed with the high faculties of reason and intelligence owes to his Maker public expressions of homage and adoration; But that the assembly should recur every seventh rather than every sixth or every eighth day, no natural sanctity of the seventh more than of the sixth or eighth persuades. That Christians, in their public assemblies, should commemorate that death by which death was overcome, and the gate of everlasting life set open to the true believer, no one who pretends to a just sense of the benefit received and the sharpness of the pain endured will dare to question: But the particular sanctity of the rite in use proceeds solely from our Lord's appointment. The same may be said of baptism. A rite by which new converts should be admitted into the church, and the children of Christian parents from their earliest infancy devoted to Christ's service in their riper age, is of evident propriety: But our Lord's solemn institution of its constant use constitutes the particular sanctity of that which is employed. The like observations applied with equal force, in ancient times, to the particulars of the Mosaic service—to the rite of circumcision—to the prohibition of the use of blood—and to the abstinence from the fruit of a particular tree, exacted of Adam in paradise, for no other purpose perhaps but as a test of his obedience; and they are still applicable with much greater force to all ceremonies of worship appointed in any national

church by the authority of its rulers. The fact is, that all ceremonies are actions, which, by a solemn appropriation of them to particular occasions, are understood to denote or are made use of to produce certain dispositions of the mind towards God: They acquire their meaning merely from the institution; and the necessity of making a choice of some one out of a variety of acts which naturally might be equally significant and equally fit to be made subservient to the intended purpose, will always produce, even in the ordinances of Divine appointment, an appearance at least of something arbitrary in the institution. Hence it will of necessity come to pass, that these ordinances will be very differently regarded by different men, according as the particular cast of each man's temper and disposition—his natural turn to seriousness or gayety—his acquired habits of sincerity or dissimulation—render either the importance of the general end, or what there may seem to be of arbitrary authority in the particular institution, the object most apt to seize upon his attention; according as he is disposed to be scrupulous in his duty, or impatient of restraint—fair and open in his actions, or accustomed to seek his private ends in the fair show and semblance of a ready and exact submission to authority. With the hypocrite, therefore, the whole of the practical part of religion will consist in an ostentatious rigour in the observance of its positive precepts. With that thoughtless tribe which constitutes, it is to be feared, the far greater proportion of mankind,—those who, without any settled principles of positive infidelity, and without any strong propensities to the excesses of debauchery, find, however, their whole occupation in the cares and what may seem the innocent amusements of the world, and defer the consideration of the future life till they find the present drawing to a close,—with persons, of this disposition, the duties of which I speak are for the most part totally neglected; insomuch, that an affected assiduity in the discharge of the positive precepts of religion on the one hand, and the neglect of them on the other, may be considered as the discriminating symptoms of the two opposite vices of

hypocrisy and profaneness: For the name of profaneness, you will observe, in strict propriety of speech belongs not only to the flagrant and avowed impiety of the atheist and libertine, but to the conduct of him who, without any thing notoriously reprehensible in his morals—any thing to make him shunned and disliked by his neighbours and acquaintances, lives, however, without any habitual fear of God and sense of religion upon his mind.

The Mosaic law, as it was planned by unerring wisdom, was unquestionably admirably well contrived for the great purposes for which it was intended,—to maintain the knowledge of the true God among a particular people, and to cherish an opinion of the necessity of an expiatory sacrifice for involuntary offences, till the season should arrive for the general revelation. Nor is it to be supposed that it failed of the purpose for which it was so well contrived: The highest examples of consummate virtue and heroic piety which the ancient world knew were formed in that people, under the discipline of their holy law. Nevertheless, the great stress laid upon ceremonial observances had, notwithstanding the continual remonstrances of the prophets—not from any defect in the law itself, but from the corruption of human nature—it had at least an ill effect upon the manners of the people. Notwithstanding the eminent instances of virtue and piety which from time to time arose among them—of virtue and piety of which faith alone in the revelation which they enjoyed might be a sufficient foundation,—yet if we look to the national character, especially in the later ages of the Jewish state, we shall find that it was rank hypocrisy, such as justifies what is said of them by a learned writer, that they were at the same time the most religious and the most profligate people upon the earth,—the most religious in the hypocrite's religion—the most regardless of what their own law taught them to be more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

Strange as the assertion may seem, this depravity of the Jewish people, the effect as has been observed of an abuse of their divine law, was favourable (so active is the merciful providence of God to

bring good out of evil),—this ill effect of the abuse of the divine law was favourable to that great end to which the law tended, the introduction of an universal revelation for the general reformation of the manners of mankind. It was favourable to this end, because it was favourable to our Saviour's method of instruction. Our Saviour's method of instruction was not by delivering a system of morality in which the formal nature of the moral good should be traced to the original idea of the *seemly* and the *fair*—the foundations of our duty discovered in the natural relations of things, and the importance of every particular duty demonstrated by its connexion with the general happiness. This was not his method of instruction, because he well knew how long it had been followed with little effect; for, abstruse speculations, whatever they may have at the bottom of solidity and truth, suit not the capacities of the many, and influence the hearts of none. The method of instruction which he chose was to throw out general maxims respecting the different branches of human duty, as often as in the course of an unreserved intercourse with persons of all ranks, characters, and conditions, he found occasion either to reprove the errors and enormities which fell under his observation, or to vindicate his own conduct and that of his disciples when either was unjustly arraigned by the hypocrites of the times. Had the manners of his contemporaries been less reprehensible, or their hypocrisy less rigid and censorious, the occasions of instruction by reproof and apology would have less frequently occurred. It was an accusation of his disciples as profaners of the Sabbath, when they took the liberty to satisfy their hunger with the ripe ears of standing corn, which they plucked as they chanced to cross a corn-field on the Sabbath day, which drew from him that admirable maxim which I have chosen for my text;—a maxim which, rightly understood, may be applied to all the positive precepts of religion no less than to the Sabbath, and clearly settles the degree of attention that is due to them; inasmuch, that whoever will keep this maxim in its right sense constantly in view, will with certainty avoid the two

extremes of an unnecessary rigour in the observance of these secondary duties on the one hand, and a profane neglect of them on the other.

After all that can be said, and said with truth, about the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, and the eternal fitness of things, it should seem that the will of God is the true foundation of moral obligation; for I cannot understand that any man's bare perception of the natural seemliness of one action and unseemliness of another should bring him under an obligation upon all occasions to do the one and to avoid the other, at the hazard of his life, to the detriment of his fortune, or even to the diminution of his *own ease*, which suffers diminution more or less in every instance in which he lays a constraint upon his own inclination. I say I cannot understand how the bare perception of good in actions of one sort, or of evil in actions of another, should create such an obligation, that a man, if he were not accountable to a superior for the conduct of his life, should yet be criminal, if, in view of his *own happiness or ease*, he should sometimes think proper to omit the action which he admires, or to do that which he disapproves. No such obligation therefore arising from the mere intuitive perception of the differences of right and wrong, it follows that notwithstanding the reality of those differences, and the incommutable nature of the two things, still the obligation upon man to act in conformity to these perceptions arises from the will of God, who enjoins a conformity of our conduct to these natural apprehensions of our minds, and binds the obligation by assurances that what we lose of present gratification shall be amply compensated in a future retribution, and by threatening the disobedient with heavier ills than the restraints of self-denial, or the loss of life. But if this be the case, that the will of God is the sole foundation of man's duty, it should seem that the distinction which is usually made between the great natural duties of justice and sobriety—all, in short, that are included in the general topics of the love of God and man,—it should seem that the distinction between these and the

positive precepts of religion is imaginary, so far at least as the distinction regards positive precepts of divine appointment; it should seem that all duties, natural and positive, are, upon this principle, of the same value and importance,—that, by consequence, all crimes are equal, and that a wilful unnecessary absence from the assemblies of the Seventh day, or from the Lord's table, is a crime of no less guilt than theft or murder.

The highest authority hath decided otherwise, and hath established the distinction. Our Lord told his disciples, that “unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they should in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven,”—that is, unless it should be a righteousness of a higher kind; for, in the sort of righteousness which they practised, the scribes and Pharisees were not easily to be out-done. He recommended to them two things very contrary to the hypocrite's religion, secrecy and brevity in their devotions. He seemed industriously to seek occasions of doing those good actions on the Sabbath day, which, to those who understood not how the principle and the end sanctified these works of mercy, seemed a violation of the institution: And it was in justification of an action in which no such merit could be pretended—an action done by some of his followers, perhaps without much consideration, to appease the cravings of a keen appetite—that he alleged the maxim in the text, “that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;” a maxim which, at the same time that it establishes in the most peremptory terms the distinction between natural duties and positive institutions, defines with the greatest precision and perspicuity in what the difference consists, and as little justifies the wilful neglect of the ordinances of religion as it countenances an hypocritical formality in the performance, or a superstitious reliance on the merit of them.

Although the obligation upon man to a discharge of any duty arises, as I have observed, from the sole will of God, yet, in the great duties of justice and charity in our dealings with men—of mildness

to our inferiors, courtesy to our equals, and submission to our governors—of sobriety and temperance in the reflections of the body, and of moderation in the pleasures which belong to the animal life, in all these we can discern a natural fitness and propriety immutably inherent in the things themselves; insomuch that any rational being, once placed in a situation to be superior to the influence of external motives, and to be determined in his conduct by the sole approbation of his own mind, must always delight in them; and though occasions may arise which may render a contrary conduct useful to the individual, yet no occasions can arise which may render it so lovely and laudable. Now, although this natural fitness and propriety be not the origin of moral obligation among men, yet it is indeed a higher principle; for it is that from which that will of God himself originates by which the natural discernment of our conscience acquires the force of a law for the regulation of our lives. Of these duties of inherent and immutable propriety it were not true to say that they are made for man: But what is denied of positive institutions is true of these, that man was made for them. They are analogous to the moral attributes of the Deity himself. The more that any man is fixed in the habitual love and practice of them, the more the image of God in that man is perfected. The perfection of these moral attributes is the foundation of the necessity of God's own existence; and if the enjoyment and display of them is (if the expression may be allowed) the end and purpose to which God himself exists, the humble imitation of these Divine perfections is the end and purpose for which men and angels were created.

We discern, therefore, in these natural duties, that intrinsic worth and seemliness which is the motive that determines the Divine will to exact the performance of them from the rational part of his creation for God's will is not arbitrary, but directed by his goodness and his wisdom. To go a step higher, the natural influence of these duties, we may reasonably presume, was the original motive which determined the Deity to create beings who should be capable of

being brought to that dignity of character which a proficiency in virtue confers, and of enjoying, in their improved state of moral worth, a corresponding happiness.

But in the positive institutions of religion we discern nothing of inherent excellence. They evidently make a part of the discipline only of our present state, by which creatures in their present state of imperfection, weak in intellect and strong in passion, might be trained to the habit of those virtues which are in themselves valuable, and, by the fear of God thus artificially as it were impressed upon their minds, be rendered in the end superior to temptation. They are therefore as it were but a secondary part of the will of God; and the rank which they hold as objects of God's will, the same they must hold as branches of man's obedience. They are no otherwise pleasing to God, than as they are beneficial to man, by enlivening the flame of genuine religion in his bosom. Man therefore was not made for these; but these were made for man. To commemorate the creation of the universe by certain ceremonies in public assemblies on the Seventh day, though a noble and a salutary employment of our time, is not, however, the principal business for which man was created; nor is the commemoration of our Redeemer's death, by any external rite, the principal end and business of the Christian's calling: But the observance of the Sabbath with certain ceremonies in public assemblies, and the commemoration of our Lord's death in the eucharist, were appointed as means of cherishing in the heart of man a more serious and interested attention to those duties which are the real end and purpose of his existence; and the peculiar service which the Christian owes his Lord, who bought him with his blood. And thus we see the distinction between the primary duties and the positive precepts of religion. The practice of the first is the very end for which man was originally created, and, after the ruin of his fall, redeemed: The other are means appointed to facilitate and secure the attainment of the end. In themselves they are of no value: insomuch, that scrupulous attention to these secondary du-

ties, when the great end of them is willfully neglected, will but aggravate the guilt of an immoral life. Man was not made for these.

But, on the other hand, it demands our serious attention, that it is declared by the very same authority that they were made for him. They are not mere arbitrary appointments of no meaning or significance. They are not useless exactions of man's power, contrived only to display the authority of the master and to imbitter the subjection of the slave. They were made for man: They were appointed for the salutary influence which the Maker of man foresees they are likely to have upon his life and conduct. To live in the wilful neglect of them is to neglect the means which Infinite Wisdom hath condescended to provide for the security of our future condition. The consequence naturally to be expected is that which is always seen to ensue,—a total profligacy of manners, hardness of heart, and contempt for God's word and commandment.

Having thus shown the true distinction between the primary duties and the positive precepts of religion, I shall in some future discourses proceed to the particular subject which the text more especially suggests, and inquire what the reverence may be due to the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation; which I shall prove to be much more than it is generally understood to be, if the principles of men are to be inferred from their practice.

SERMON XLIX.

By BISHOP HORSLEY.

The Observance of the Sabbath.

MARK, ii. 27.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

WHAT is affirmed of the Sabbath in these remarkable words is equally true of all the ordinances of external worship. The notion therefore is general; and, at the same time, that it establishes a distinction between the primary duties and the positive institutions of religion, it clearly

defines the circumstance in which the difference consists. Of the positive institutions of religion, even of those of Divine appointment, whatever sanctity may be derived to them from the will of God, which is indeed the supreme rule and proper foundation of human duty,—whatever importance may belong to them as necessary means for the attainment of the noblest end, the improvement of man's moral character, and the consequent advancement of his happiness,—yet we have our Lord's authority to say, that the observance of them is not itself the end for which man was created: Man was not made for these. Of natural duties we affirm the contrary; The acquisition of that virtue which consists in the habitual love and practice of them is the very final cause of man's existence. The intrinsic worth and seemliness of that virtue is so great, that it may be presumed to be the motive which determined the will of God to create beings with capacities for the attainment. These therefore are the things for which man was made: They were not made for him. They derive not their importance from a temporary subserviency to the interests of man in his present condition—to the happiness and preservation of the individual or of the kind. They are no part of an arbitrary discipline, contrived, after man was formed, for the trial and exercise of his obedience. Their worth is in the things themselves. In authority, they are higher than law—in time, older than creation—in worth, more valuable than the universe. The positive precepts of religion, on the contrary, are of the nature of political institutions, which are good or bad in relation only to the interests of particular communities. These therefore were made for man. And although man hath no authority to give himself a general dispensation from any law which hath the sanction of his Maker's will, yet, since God hath given him faculties to distinguish between things for which he is made and things which are made for him, it is every man's duty, in the application of God's general laws to his own conduct on particular occasions, to attend to this distinction. If, by an affected precision in the exercises of external devotion, while

he disregards the great duties of morality, he thinks that he satisfies the end of his creation, if he sets sacrifice in competition with mercy, as the Jews did, when, under the pretence of rich offerings to the temple, they defrauded their parents in their old age of the support which was their due—and when they took advantage of the rigour with which their law enjoined the observance of the Sabbath to excuse themselves on that day from offices of charity, while they could dispense with the institution for the preservation of their own property,—whoever, after these examples, thinks to commute for natural duties by an exact observance of positive institutions, deceives himself, and offers the highest indignity to God, in believing or affecting to believe that he will judge of the conduct of moral agents otherwise than according to the truth of things—that he will prefer the means to the end, the subordinate to the primary duties. On the other hand, the wilful neglect of the ordinances of religion, under a pretence of a general attention to the weightier matters of the law, argues either a criminal security or a profane indifference. No one, whatever pretensions he may make, can have a just sense of the importance and the difficulty of virtuous attainments, who in mere indolence desires to release himself from a discipline which may diminish the difficulty and insure the effect: Nor is it consistent with just apprehensions of the Divine wisdom, to suppose that the means which God hath appointed in subservience to any end may be neglected with impunity. A neglect, therefore of the ordinances of religion of Divine appointment, is the sure symptom of a criminal indifference about those higher duties by which men pretend to atone for the omission: It is too often found to be the beginning of a licentious life; and for the most part ends in the highest excesses of profligacy and irreligion.

Having thus taken occasion from the text to explain the comparative merit of natural duties and positive precepts,—and having shown the necessity of a reverent attention to the latter, as to means appointed by God for the security of virtue in its more essential parts,—I proceed to the inquiry which the text more

immediately suggests—the sanctity of the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation. The libertinism of the times renders this inquiry important; and the spirit of refinement and disputation has rendered it in some degree obscure. I shall therefore divide it into its parts, and proceed by a slow and gradual disquisition. An opinion has been for some time gaining ground, that the observance of a Sabbath in the Christian church is a matter of mere consent and custom, to which we are no more obliged by virtue of any Divine precept than to any other ceremony of the Mosaic law. I shall first, therefore, show you, that Christians actually stand obliged to the observance of a Sabbath,—that is, to the separation of some certain day for the public worship of God; and I shall reply to what may be alleged with some colour of reason on the other side of the question. I shall, in the next place, inquire how far the Christian, in the observance of his Sabbath, is held to the original injunction of keeping every seventh day; and which day of the seven is his proper Sabbath. When I have shown you that the obligation to the observance of every seventh day actually remains upon him, and that the first day of the week is his proper Sabbath, I shall, in the last place, inquire in what manner this Christian Sabbath should be kept.

To the general question, What regard is due to the institution of a Sabbath under the Christian dispensation? the answer is plainly this,—Neither more nor less than was due to it in the patriarchal ages, before the Mosaic covenant took place. It is a gross mistake to consider the Sabbath as a mere festival of the Jewish church, deriving its whole sanctity from the Levitical law. The contrary appears, as well from the evidence of the fact, which sacred history affords, as from the reason of the thing, which the same history declares. The religious observance of the seventh day hath a place in the Decalogue among the very first duties of natural religion. The reason assigned for the injunction is general, and hath no relation or regard to the particular circumstances of the Israelites, or to the particular relation in which they stood to God as his chosen people. The creation

of the world was an event equally interesting to the whole human race; and the acknowledgment of God as our Creator is a duty in all ages and in all countries, equally incumbent upon every individual of mankind. The terms in which the reason of the ordinance is assigned plainly describe it as an institution of a earlier age: "Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh, and set it apart." (That is the true import of the word "hallowed it.") These words, you will observe, express a past title. It is not said "Therefore the Lord now blesses the seventh day, and sets it apart;" but "Therefore he *did* bless it, and set it apart in time past; and he now requires that you his chosen people should be observant of that ancient institution." And in farther confirmation of the fact, we find, by the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, that the Israelites were acquainted with the Sabbath, and had been accustomed to some observance of it, before Moses received the tables of the law at Sinai. When the manna was first given for the nourishment of the army in the Wilderness, the people were told that on the sixth day they should collect the double of the daily portion. When the event was found to answer to the promise, Moses gave command that the redundant portion should be prepared and laid by for the meal of the succeeding day: "For tomorrow," said he, "is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: On that day ye shall not find it in the field; for the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days." He mentions the Sabbath as a Divine ordinance, with which he evidently supposes the people were well acquainted; for he alleges the well-known sanctity of that day to account for the extraordinary quantity of manna which was found upon the ground on the day preceding it. But the appointment of the Sabbath, to which his words allude, must have been earlier than the appointment of it in the law, of which no part was yet given: For this first gathering of the manna, which is recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, was in the second month of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt; and at Sinai, where the law was given, they

arrived not till the third. Indeed, the antiquity of the Sabbath was a thing so well understood among the Jews themselves, that some of their Rabbins had the vanity to pretend that an exact adherence to the observation of this day, under the severities of the Egyptian servitude, was the merit by which their ancestors procured a miraculous deliverance. The deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage was surely an act of God's free mercy; in which their own merit had no share: Nor is it likely that their Egyptian lords left them much at liberty to sanctify the Sabbath, if they were inclined to do it. The tradition therefore is vain and groundless: But it clearly speaks the opinion of those among whom it passed, of the antiquity of the institution in question; which appears, indeed, upon better evidence, to have been coeval with the world itself: In the book of Genesis, the mention of this institution closes the history of the creation.

An institution of this antiquity and of this general importance could derive no part of its sanctity from the authority of the Mosaic law; and the abrogation of that law no more releases the worshippers of God from a rational observation of a Sabbath than it cancels the injunction of filial piety, or the prohibitions of theft and murder, adultery, calumny, and avarice. The worship of the Christian church is properly to be considered as a restoration of the patriarchal, in its primitive simplicity and purity;—and of the patriarchal worship the Sabbath was the noblest and perhaps the simplest rite.

Thus it should seem that Christians are clearly obliged to the observance of a Sabbath. But let us consider what may be alleged with any colour of reason on the other side. Now, it may be said that the argument which we have used for the perpetual sanctity of the Sabbath is of that sort which must go for nothing, because it proves too much: If the antiquity and the universality of the original institution be made the ground of a permanent obligation to the observance of it, it may seem a consequence, that the practice of the world, since the establishment of Christianity, must have been far more deficient than hath e-

been suspected; since, upon this principle, mankind, it may be said, should still be held to various ceremonies which for many ages have sunk into disuse. Circumcision, it is true, will not come within the question; for though four or perhaps six centuries older than the law, it was only a mark set upon a particular family. But the prohibition of the use of blood in food bore the same antiquity, it may be said, with respect to the second race of men, as the Sabbath with respect to the first. The prohibition of blood followed the deluge as closely as the Sabbath followed the creation: The one was no less general to all the sons of Noah than the other to all the sons of Adam. The use of animals at all for food is only to be justified by the Creator's express permission; and since the exception of the blood of the animal accompanied the grant of the flesh, the prohibition, it may be said, unless it was at any time solemnly repealed, must be as general and as permanent as the licence. In the assembly of the apostles at Jerusalem, of which we read in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, when the question was solemnly discussed concerning the obligation of the Jewish law upon the converts from the Gentiles, the prohibition of blood was one of three things specially reserved in the solemn act of repeal in which the deliberations of that council terminated. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,"—these are the words of the apostolical rescript,—“it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things,—that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.” It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to the apostles to lay no other restraint upon the Gentile converts: But *this* restraint, of which an abstinence from blood made a part, it seemed good to the apostles, nor to the apostles only, but to the Holy Ghost also, to lay; and they declare that they laid it on as a *necessary* thing: Whereas, in the same decree, which so remarkably reserves the abstinence from blood, the Sabbath is not at all reserved as a thing either of necessity or expedience. It should seem, there-

fore, it may be said, that the prohibition of blood was an ordinance of more lasting obligation than the Sabbath. The argument from antiquity and original generality applies with equal force to both; and the prohibition is enforced by the authority of the apostles, who mention no necessity of any observance of a Sabbath in the Christian Church. Upon what principle, then, is the sanctity of the Sabbath maintained by those who openly disregard the prohibition?

I must confess, that had the Sabbath been a rite of the Mosaic institution, or were any reason to be assigned for the prohibition of blood which might be of equal force in all ages, I should hold this argument unanswerable, and feel myself compelled to admit that the disregard of the Sabbath were a less crime than the use of blood: But, as the apostles assembled to consider whether the Gentile converts were to be holden to any part of the Jewish ritual, and if to any, to what part, it was beside their purpose to mention any thing that was not considered by those who consulted them as a branch of Judaism. Fornication, indeed, they mention; for it hath been owing to that refinement of sentiment which the Christian religion hath produced that this is at last understood to be a breach of natural morality. In the heathen world it was never thought to be a crime except it was accompanied with injury to a virgin's honour, or with violation of the marriage-bed. Abstinence in this instance was considered as a peculiarity of Judaism; and had it not been mentioned in the apostolical decree, the Gentile converts would not have been very ready to discern that the prohibition of this crime is included in the seventh commandment. But with regard to the Sabbath, although it was gone into disuse among the heathen long before the appearance of our Saviour, yet the most ignorant idolater observed some stated festivals in honour of the imaginary divinities to which his worship was addressed. When an idolater therefore was converted, the natural consequence of his conversion—that is, of his going over from the worship of idols to the worship of the true God,—the natural and immediate consequence would be, that he

would observe the festival of the true God instead of the festival of his idol. Thus the Gentile convert would spontaneously adopt the observation of the Sabbath, as a natural duty—a branch, indeed, of that most general commandment “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” It was therefore as little necessary that the Sabbath should be expressly observed in the apostolical decree, as that express reservation should be made of any other of the ten commandments: Nor is the neglect of the Sabbath more to be justified by the silence of the apostolical council concerning the necessity of the observation, than idolatry or blasphemy is to be justified by their silence about the second or the third commandment.

The argument, therefore, from the parallel antiquity of the injunction of a Sabbath and the prohibition of blood, rather goes to prove that the prohibition is in force, than to invalidate the conclusion of the perpetual sanctity of the Sabbath from the early date of the institution. Accordingly, it hath been the practice of very considerable men, within our own memory, to abstain, from conscientious scruples, from all meats prepared with the blood of animals, and from the flesh of animals otherwise killed than by the effusion of their blood. The truth, however, seems to be, that the two ordinances, the observation of a Sabbath and abstinence from blood, although they were equally binding upon all mankind at the time when they were severally enjoined, differ nevertheless in this,—that the reason of the Sabbath continues invariably the same; or, if it changes at all, it hath been gaining rather than losing its importance from the first institution. The reason of the prohibition of blood was founded on the state of mankind before the coming of Christ, and was peculiar to those early ages. The use of the Sabbath, as it began, will end only with the world itself. The abstinence from blood was a part of that handwriting of ordinances to which sin gave a temporary importance, and which were blotted out when the Messiah made an end of sin by the expiatory sacrifice of the cross. I have already had occasion to remark, that it was the great end

of the numerous sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, to impress the Jewish people for a season (the chosen depositaries of revealed truth) with an opinion of the necessity of a sanguinary expiation even for involuntary offences,—to train them to the habitual belief of that awful maxim, that “without blood there shall be no remission.” The end of those earlier sacrifices, which were of use in the patriarchal ages, was unquestionably the same. To inculcate the same important lesson, in the earliest instance of a sacrifice upon record, respect was had to the shepherd’s sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock rather than to the husbandman’s offering of the fruit of his ground; and for the same reason, by the prohibition laid upon the sons of Noah, and afterwards enforced in the severest terms in the Mosaic law, blood was sanctified, as it were, as the immediate instrument of atonement. The end of the prohibition was to impress mankind with a high reverence for blood, as a most holy thing, consecrated to the purpose of the general expiation: But this expiatory virtue belonged not to the blood of bulls and of goats, but to the blood of Christ, of which the other was by God’s appointment made a temporary emblem. As the importance, therefore, of all inferior sacrifices, and of all the cleansings and purifications of the law, ceased when once the only meritorious sacrifice had been offered on the cross, and the true atonement made, animal blood, at the same time and for the same reason, lost its sanctity. The necessity, therefore, mentioned in the apostolic rescript, so far as it regards the restriction from the use of blood, can be understood only of a temporary necessity, founded on the charitable condescension which, in the infancy of the church, was due from the Gentile converts to the inveterate prejudices of their Hebrew brethren. Accordingly, although we read of no subsequent decree of the apostolical college, rescinding the restriction which by the act of their first assembly they thought proper to impose, yet we find what is equivalent to a decree, in the express licence given by St. Paul to the Christians of Corinth, that of whatever meat was set before them, provided ~~it was not~~ ^{it carried not} the imputation of ido-

latry, by partaking of a feast upon the victim in an idol's temple. With this exception, they had permission to eat whatever was sold in the shambles, and whatever was served up at table, without any attention to the legal distinctions of clean and unclean, and without any anxious inquiry upon what occasion or in what manner the animals had been slaughtered.

Thus it appears, that the prohibition of blood in food was for a time indeed, by the generality of the restraint, binding upon all mankind: But, in the reason of the thing, its importance was but temporary; and when its importance ceased, the restraint was taken off,—not indeed by a decree of the whole college of apostles, but still by apostolical authority. The observance of a Sabbath, on the contrary, was not only a general duty at the time of the institution, but, in the nature of the thing, of perpetual importance; since, in every stage of the world's existence, it is man's interest to remember and his duty to acknowledge his dependence upon God as the Creator of all things, and of man among the rest. The observance of a Sabbath was accordingly enforced, not by any apostolical decree, but by the example of the apostles, after the solemn abrogation of the Mosaic law.

Thus, I trust, I have shown that the observance of a Sabbath, as it was of earlier institution than the religion of the Jews, and no otherwise belonged to Judaism, than as, with other ordinances of the patriarchal church, it was adopted by the Jewish legislature, necessarily survives the extinction of the Jewish law, and makes a part of Christianity. I have shown how essentially it differs from other ordinances, which, however they may boast a similar antiquity, and for a season an equal sanctity, were only of a temporary importance. I have shown that it is a part of the rational religion of man, in every stage and state of his life, till he shall attain that happy release from the toil of perpetual conflict with temptation—from the hardship of duty as a task, of which the rest of the Sabbath is itself a type. I have therefore established my first proposition, that Christians stand obliged to

observance of a Sabbath. I am, in the next place, to inquire how far the Christian, in the observance of a Sabbath, is held to the original injunction of keeping every seventh day; and which day of the seven is his proper Sabbath. And this shall be the business of my next discourse.

SERMON L.

By BISHOP HORSLEY.

The Observance of the Sabbath.

MARK, ii. 27.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

THE general application of this maxim of our Lord, as a rule establishing the true distinction between natural duties and positive institutions, I have already shown. I have already shown you, that, rightly understood, whatever pre-eminence in merit it may ascribe (as it ascribes indeed the greatest) to those things which are not good because they are commanded, but are commanded because they are in themselves good, it nevertheless as little justifies the neglect of the external ordinances of religion as it warrants the hypocritical substitution of instituted forms for those higher duties which it teaches us to consider as the very end of our existence. In the particular inquiry which the text more immediately suggests, what regard may be due to the institution of the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation, I have so far proceeded as to show, in opposition to an opinion which too visibly influences the practice of the present age, that Christians are indeed obliged to the observance of a Sabbath. It remains for me to inquire how far the Christian, in the observance of a Sabbath, is held to the original injunction of keeping every seventh day; and when I have shown you that this obligation actually remains upon him, I am, in the last place, to show in what manner his Sabbath should be kept.

The spirit of the Jewish law was rigid, and severity. Rigour and severity were adapted to the rude manners of the first

ages of mankind, and were particularly suited to the refractory temper of the Jewish people. The rigour of the law itself was far outdone by the rigour of the popular superstition and the Pharisaical hypocrisy,—if, indeed, superstition and hypocrisy, rather than a particular ill-will against our Lord, were the motives with the people and their rulers to tax him with a breach of the Sabbath, when they saw his power exerted on the Sabbath day for the relief of the afflicted. The Christian law is the law of liberty. We are not therefore to take the measure of our obedience from the letter of the Jewish law,—much less from Jewish prejudices and the suggestions of Jewish malignity. In the sanctification of the Sabbath, in particular, we have our Lord's express authority to take a pious discretion for our guide; keeping constantly in view the end of the institution, and its necessary subordination to higher duties. But, in the use of this discretion, I fear it is the fashion to indulge in a greater latitude than our Lord's maxims allow or his example warrants; and although the letter of the Jewish law is not to be the Christian's guide, yet perhaps, in the present instance, the particular injunctions of the law, rationally interpreted by reference to the general end of the institution, will best enable us to determine what is the obligation to the observance of a particular day,—what the proper observation of the day may be,—and how far the practice of the present age corresponds with the purpose and spirit of the ordinance.

The injunction of the Sabbath, in the fourth commandment, is accompanied with the history and the reason of the original institution. Both the history and the reason given here are the same which occur in the second chapter of *Genesis*. The history is briefly this,—that “God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.” “He hallowed it,”—that is, God himself distinguished this particular day, and set it apart from the rest; and “he blessed it,”—that is, he appropriated this day to religious exercises on the part of man; and he engaged on his own part, to accept the homage which should on this day be offered to him. He promised to be pro-

pitious to the prayers, public and private, which should be offered to him on this day in the true spirit of piety, humility, and faith. This is, I think, the import of the phrase that God “blessed the day.” He annexed the promise of his especial blessing to the regular discharge of a duty enjoined. The reason of this sanctification of the seventh day was founded on the order in which the work of the creation had been carried on. In this business, we are told, the Divine power was active for six successive days; on the sixth day all was finished; and on the seventh God rested: His power was no longer exerted in the business of making; the whole world being now made, arranged, and finished.

From the reason thus assigned for the institution, it is easy to understand that the worship originally required of men on this day was to praise God as the Creator of the universe, and to acknowledge their dependance upon him and subjection to him as his creatures: And it is evident that this worship is due to the Creator from all men in all ages, since none in any age are not his creatures. The propriety of the particular appointment of every seventh day is also evident from the reason assigned, if the fact be as the letter of the sacred history represents it, that the creation was the gradual work of six days. It hath ever been the folly or the pride of man to make a difficulty of every thing of which he hath not the penetration to discern the reason. It is very certain that God needs no time for the execution of his purposes. Had it so pleased him, the universe, in its finished form, with all its furniture and all its inhabitants, might have started into existence in a moment. To say “Let the world be,” had been as easy to God as “Let there be light?” and the effect must have followed. Hence, as if a necessity lay upon the Deity upon all occasions to do all to which his omnipotence extends,—or, on the contrary, it were not impossible that Infinite power should in any instance do its utmost (for whatever hath been done, more must be within its ability to perform, or it were not infinite),—unmindful of these principles, some have dreamt of I know not what figures and allegories in that part of

the Mosaic history which describes the creation as a work performed in time and distributed into parts; imagining, in opposition to the letter of the story, that the whole must have been instantaneously accomplished. Others, with more discernment, have suspected, that when once the chaos was produced and the elements invested with their qualities, physical causes, which work their effect in time, were in some measure concerned in the progress of the business; the Divine power acting only at intervals, for certain purposes to which physical causes were insufficient, such as the division of the general chaos into distinct globes and systems, and the formation of the first plants and animals. These notions are indeed perfectly consistent with sound philosophy; nor am I aware that they are in any way repugnant to the sacred history: But from these principles a conclusion has too hastily been drawn, that a week would be too short time for physical causes to accomplish their part of the business; and it has been imagined that a day must be used figuratively in the history of the creation to denote at least a thousand years, or perhaps a longer period.

In what manner the creation was conducted, is a question about a fact; and, like all questions about facts, must be determined, not by theory, but by testimony; and if no testimony were extant, the fact must remain uncertain. But the testimony of the sacred historian is *peremptory* and explicit. No expressions could be found in any language to describe a gradual progress of the work for six successive days, and the completion of it on the sixth, in the literal and common sense of the word "day," more definite and unequivocal than those employed by Moses; and they who seek or admit figurative expositions of such expressions as these seem to be not sufficiently aware that it is one thing to write a history and another to compose riddles. The expressions in which Moses describes the days of the creation, literally rendered, are these: When he has described the first day's work, he says—"And there was morning and there was evening, one day;" when he has described the second day's work,

was morning and there was evening, a second-day; when he has described the third day's work, "There was evening and there was morning, a third day." Thus, in the progress of his narrative, at the end of each day's work, he counts up the days which had passed off from the beginning of the business; and, to obviate all doubt what portion of time he meant to denote by the appellation of "a day," he describes each day of which the mention occurs as consisting of one evening and one morning, or, as the Hebrew words literally import, of the decay of light and the return of it. By what description could the word "day" be more expressly limited to its literal and common meaning, as denoting that portion of time which is measured and consumed by the earth's revolution on her axis? That this revolution was performed in the same space of time in the beginning of the world as now, I would not over confidently affirm: But we are not at present concerned in the resolution of that question; a day, whatever was its space, was still the same thing in nature,—a portion of time measured by the same motion, divisible into the same seasons of morning and noon, evening and midnight, and making the like part of longer portions of time measured by other motions. The day was itself marked by the vicissitudes of darkness and light; and so many times repeated, it made a month; and so many times more, a year. For six such days God was making the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that therein is; and rested on the seventh day. This fact, clearly established by the sacred writer's testimony, in the literal meaning of these plain words, abundantly evinces the perpetual importance and propriety of consecrating one day in seven to the public worship of the Creator.

I say one day in seven. In the first ages of the world, the creation of the world was the benefaction by which God was principally known, and for which he was chiefly to be worshipped. The Jews, in their religious assemblies, had to commemorate other blessings—the political creation of their nation out of Abraham's family, and their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. We Chris-

time have to commemorate, beside the common benefit of the creation, the transcendent blessing of our redemption—our new creation to the hope of everlasting life, which our Lord's resurrection to life on the first day of the week is a sure pledge and evidence. You see, therefore, that the Sabbath, in the progress of ages, hath acquired new ends, by new manifestations of the Divine mercy; and these new ends justify correspondent alterations of the original institution. It has been imagined that a change was made of the original day by Moses,—that the Sabbath was transferred by him from the day on which it had been originally kept in the patriarchal ages, to that on which the Israelites left Egypt. The conjecture is not unnatural; but it is, in my judgment, a mere conjecture, of which the sacred history affords neither proof nor confutation. This, however, is certain, that upon our Lord's resurrection, the Sabbath was transferred, in memory of that event, the great foundation of the Christian's hopes, from the last to the first day of the week. The alteration seems to have been made by the authority of the apostles, and to have taken place on the very day on which our Lord arose; for on that day the apostles were assembled, and on that day se'night we find them assembled again. The celebration of these two first Sundays was honoured with our Lord's own presence. It was perhaps to set a mark of distinction upon this day in particular, that the intervening week passed off, as it should seem, without any repetition of his first visit to the eleven apostles. From that time, the Sunday was the constant Sabbath of the primitive church. The Christian therefore who devoutly sanctifies one day in seven, although it be the first day of the week, not the last, as was originally ordained, may rest assured that he fully satisfies the spirit of the ordinance. Had the propriety of the alteration been less apparent than it is from the reason of the thing, the authority of the apostles to loose and bind was absolute.

I must remark, however, that their authority upon this point was exercised not purely in consideration of the expediency, but upon the higher consideration

of the necessity of a change,—a necessity arising, as I conceive, out of the original spirit of the institution. The original observance of a Sabbath on every seventh day, was a public and distinguishing characteristic of the worship of the Creator who finished his work in six days, and rested on the seventh. This was the public character by which the worship of the true God was distinguished; that his festival returned every seventh day; and, by the strict observance of this ordinance, the holy patriarchs, and the Jews their descendants, made as it were a public protestation once in every week against the errors of idolatry, which, instead of the true God, the Creator of the universe, paid its adoration either to the works of God—the sun and moon and other celestial bodies, or to mere figments of the human imagination, misled by a diabolical illusion—to imaginary beings presiding over the natural elements, or the departed ghosts of deceased kings and heroes—and, in the last stage of the corruption, to inanimate images, by which the supposed influences of the celestial bodies and physical qualities of the elements were emblematically represented, and the likenesses of the deified kings supposed to be portrayed. To this protestation against heathenism, the propriety of which binds the worshippers of the true God in all ages to a weekly Sabbath, it is reasonable that Christians should add a similar protestation against Judaism. It was necessary that Christians should openly separate as it were from the communion of the Jews, who, after their perverse rejection of our Lord, ceased to be the true church of God: And the sanctification of the Saturday being the most visible and notorious character of the Jewish worship, it was necessary that the Christian Sabbath should be transferred to some other day of the week. A change of the day being for these reasons necessary, the choice of the apostles was directed to the first day of the week, as that on which our Lord's resurrection finished and sealed the work of our redemption; so that, in the same act by which we acknowledge the Creator, and protest against the claims of the Jews to be still the depositaries of the

true religion, we might confess the Saviour whom the Jews crucified.

You have now seen that the Christian clearly stands obliged to the observance of a Sabbath; that in the observance of his Sabbath he is held to the original institution of keeping every seventh day; and that his proper Sabbath is the first day of the seven. By keeping a Sabbath, we acknowledge a God, and declare that we are not atheists; by keeping one day in seven, we protest against idolatry, and acknowledge that God who in the beginning made the heavens and the earth; and by keeping our Sabbath on the first of the week, we protest against Judaism, and acknowledge that God who, having made the world, sent his only begotten Son to redeem mankind. The observation therefore of the Sunday in the Christian church is a public weekly assertion of the two first articles in our Creed,—the belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

I must not quit this part of my subject, without briefly taking notice of a text in St. Paul's epistle to the Colossians which has been supposed to contradict the whole doctrine which I have asserted, and to prove that the observation of a Sabbath in the Christian church is no point of duty, but a matter of mere compliance with an ancient custom. In the second chapter of that epistle, St. Paul, speaking of "the handwriting of ordinances which is blotted out, having been nailed to the Redeemer's cross," adds, in the sixteenth verse, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." From this text, no less a man than the venerable Calvin drew the conclusion, in which he has been rashly followed by other considerable men, that the sanctification of the seventh day is no indispensable duty in the Christian church,—that it is one of those carnal ordinances of the Jewish Dispensation which our Lord hath blotted out. The truth however is, that, in the apostolical age, the first day of the week, though it was observed with great reverence, was not called the Sabbath day, but the Lord's day,—that the

separation of the Christian church from the Jewish communion might be marked by the name as well as by the day of their weekly festival; and the name of the Sabbath days was appropriated to the Saturdays, and certain days in the Jewish church which were likewise called Sabbaths in the law, because they were observed with no less sanctity. The Sabbath days therefore of which St. Paul in this passage speaks were not the Sundays of the Christians, but the Saturdays and the other Sabbaths of the Jewish calendar. The Judaizing heretics, with whom St. Paul was all his life engaged, were strenuous advocates for the observation of these Jewish festivals in the Christian church; and his (St. Paul's) admonition to the Colossians is, that they should not be disturbed by the censures of those who reproached them for neglecting to observe these Jewish Sabbaths with Jewish ceremonies. It appears from the first epistle to the Corinthians, that the Sunday was observed in the church of Corinth with St. Paul's own approbation. It appears from the Apocalypse, that it was generally observed in the time when that book was written by St. John; and it is mentioned by the earliest apologists of the Christian faith as a necessary branch of Christian worship. But the Sabbaths of the Jewish church are abolished; nor is the Christian, in the observation of his own Sabbath, to conduct himself by the childish rules of the old Pharisaical superstition. This brings me to consider, in the last place, the manner in which the Christian Sabbath is to be kept.

As the reason of the institution rests on such common benefits as the creation of the world and man's redemption, it is evident that all descriptions of men stand obliged to the duties of the day. No elevation of rank may exempt; no meanness of condition may exclude; no inexperience of youth disqualifies for the task; no decrepitude of age is unequal to the toil; no tenderness of sex can suffer from the fatigue. Since the proper business of the day thus engages every rank, every sex, and every age, it is evident that it requires a suspension of the ordinary business of the world; for none can be at leisure for secular em-

employments, when all are occupied, as they ought to be, in devotion. All servile labour and all worldly business was accordingly prohibited by the Mosaic law, under the highest penalties; and capital punishment was, in an early instance, actually inflicted on a man who only went out on the Sabbath to gather sticks for fuel. Christian magistrates have not only the permission, they have the injunction of our Lord—they have the authority at least of inference from the example of what he did himself, and what he justified when done by his disciples, to remit much of the rigour of this interdiction. Such a cessation however of business and of pleasure should be enforced, as may leave neither necessity nor temptation upon any denomination of men in the community to neglect the proper observance of the festival. It is to be remembered, that although the worship of God is the chief end of the institution, yet the refreshment of the lower ranks of mankind, by an intermission of their labours, is indisputably a secondary object. “Thou shalt rest on the seventh day,” said the law, “that the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.” A handmaid, in the language of the Old Testament, denotes a female slave: The son of a handmaid therefore is the offspring of a female slave; which, by the laws of the Jews, as of all people among whom slavery hath been allowed, was the property of the master of the mother. The stranger seems here to be set in opposition to the homeborn slave,—denoting a foreign slave bought with money or taken in war. These two descriptions of the homeborn and the foreign slave comprehend the whole of that oppressed and helpless order of mankind. It is expressly provided by the law, that on the Sabbath day this harassed race of mortals should have their refreshment. Now, as these injunctions were evidently founded on the general principles of philanthropy, it should seem, that allowance being made for the difference between the rigour of Jewish and the liberality of the Christian dispensation,—and allowance being also made for the different circumstances of the ancient and the modern world,—these injunctions of the suspension of the

labours of the lower ranks are universally and perpetually in force, in all parts of the world, and in all ages; the rather as they are no less calculated for the benefit of the higher than for the comfort of the lower orders. It is useful to both to be admonished at frequent intervals,—the one for their consolation, the other for the suppression of that pride which a condition of ease and superiority is too apt to inspire. It is useful to both to be reminded of their equal relation to their common Lord, as the creatures of his power—the subjects of his government—the children of his love, by an institution which at frequent intervals unites them in his service. Under this recollection, the servant will obey with fidelity and cheerfulness, and the superior will govern with kindness and lenity. It is of the highest importance to the present good humour of society, and to the future interests of men of every rank, that these injunctions should be observed with all the exactness which the present state of society may admit.

The labour of man is not the only toil which the Mosaic law prohibited on the Sabbath day. “On the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest.” It was a principle with some of the heathen moralists, that no rights subsist between man and the lower animals,—that, in the exercise of our dominion over them, we are at liberty to pursue our own profit and convenience, without any consideration of the fatigue and the miseries which they may undergo. The holy Scriptures seem to speak another language, when they say “The righteous man is merciful even to his beast;” and as no reason can be alleged why the ox or the ass of Palestine should be treated with more tenderness than the kindred brutes of other countries, it must be upon this general principle, that mercy is in some degree due to the animals beneath us, that the Divine legislator of the Jews provided on the Sabbath for their refreshment. This, therefore, like the former provision (allowance still being made for the different spirit of Judaism and Christianity), is to be considered as a general and standard part of the institution, which is violated whenever, for the mere pleasure and convenience of the

master and the owner, either servants, or even animals, are subjected to the same severity of toil on the Sabbath which belongs to the natural condition of the one and to the civil rank of the other on the six days of the week. On the Sabbath, man is to hold a sort of edifying communion with the animals beneath him; acknowledging, by a short suspension of his dominion over them, the right of the Creator in himself as well as in them, and confessing that his own right over them is derived from the grant of the superior Lord.

It appears from what has been said, that the practice, which is become so common in this country among all ranks of men, of making long journeys on the Sabbath day without any urgent necessity, is one of the highest breaches of this holy institution. It breaks in upon the principal business of the day, laying some under a necessity, and furnishing others with a pretence for withdrawing themselves from the public assemblies; and it defeats the ordinance in its subordinate ends, depriving servants and cattle of that temporary exemption from fatigue which it was intended both should enjoy. This, like other evils, hath arisen from small beginnings; and by an unperceived, because a natural and a gradual growth, hath attained at last an alarming height. Persons of the higher ranks, whether from a certain vanity of appearing great, by assuming a privilege of doing what was generally forbidden, or for the convenience of travelling when the roads were the most empty, began within our own memory to make their journeys on a Sunday. In a commercial country, the great fortunes acquired in trade have a natural tendency to level all distinctions but what arises from affluence. Wealth supplies the place of nobility; birth retains only the privilege of setting the first example. The city presently catches the manners of the court; and the vices of the high-born peer are faithfully copied in the life of the opulent merchant and the thriving tradesman. Accordingly, in the space of a few years, the Sunday became the travelling day of all who travel in their own carriages. But why should the humbler citizen, whose scandal means oblige him to commit his

person to the crammed stage-coach, more than his wealthier neighbour, be exposed to the hardship of travelling on the working days, when the multitude of heavy carts and waggons moving and fro in all directions renders the roads unpleasant and unsafe to all carriages of a slighter fabric; especially when the only real inconvenience, the danger of such obstructions, is infinitely increased to him, by the greater difficulty with which the vehicle in which he makes his uncomfortable journey crosses out of the way, in deep and miry roads, to avoid the fatal jostle? The force of these principles was soon perceived; and, in open defiance of the laws, stage-coaches have for several years travelled on the Sundays. The waggoner soon understands that the road is as free for him as for the coachman,—that if the magistrate connives at the one he cannot enforce the law against the other; and the Sunday traveller now breaks the Sabbath without any advantage gained in the safety or pleasure of his journey. It may seem, that the evil, grown to this height, would become its own remedy: But this is not the case. The temptation indeed to the crime among the higher ranks of the people subsists no longer; but the reverence for the day among all orders is extinguished, and the abuse goes on from the mere habit of profaneness. In the country, the roads are crowded on the Sunday, as on any other day, with travellers of every sort: The devotion of the villages is interrupted by the noise of the carriages passing through, or stopping at the inns for refreshment. In the metropolis, instead of that solemn stillness of the vacant streets in the hours of the public service, which might suit, as in our fathers' days, with the sanctity of the day, and be a reproof to every one who should stir abroad but upon the business of devotion, the mingled racket of worldly business and pleasure is going on with little abatement; and in the churches and chapels which adjoin the public streets, the sharp rattle of the whirling pheasant, and the graver rumble of the loaded waggon, mixed with the oaths and imprecations of the brawling drivers, disturb the congregation and stun the voice of the preacher.

These scandals call loudly for redress : But redress will be in vain expected from any increased severity of the laws, without a concurrence of the willing example of the great. This is one of the many instances in which a corrupt fashion in the higher orders of society will render all law weak and ineffectual. I am not without hope that the example of the great will not be wanting. I trust that we are awakened to a sense of the importance of religious ordinances, by the dreadful exhibition of the mischiefs of irreligion in the present state of the neighbouring apostate nation ; and though our recovery from the disease of carelessness and indifference is yet in its beginning, appearances justify a sanguine hope of its continuance, and of its ultimate termination, through the grace of God, in a perfect convalescence. And when once the duties of religion shall be recommended by the general example of the superior ranks, then, and not till then, the bridle of legal restraint will act with effect upon vulgar profligacy.

But, in the application of whatever means for the remedy of the evil,—whether of legal penalties, which ought to be enforced, and in some cases ought to be heightened—or of the mild persuasion of example—or of the two united, which alone can be successful,—in the application of these various means, the zeal of reform, if it would not defeat its own end, must be governed and moderated by a prudent attention to the general spirit of Christianity, and to the general end of the institution. The spirit of Christianity is rational, manly, and ingenuous ; in all cases delighting in the substantial works of judgment, justice, and mercy, more than in any external forms. The primary and general end of the institution is the public worship of God, the Creator of the world and Redeemer of mankind.

Among the Jews, the absolute cessation of all animal activity on their Sabbath had a particular meaning in reference to their history ; It was a standing symbolical memory of their miraculous deliverance from a state of servitude. But to mankind in general—to us Christians in particular, the proper business

of the day is the worship of God in public assemblies, from which none may without some degree of crime be unnecessarily absent. Private devotion is the Christian's daily duty ; but the peculiar duty of the Sabbath is public worship. As for those parts of the day which are not occupied in the public duty, every man's own conscience, without any interference of public authority, and certainly without any officious interposition of the private judgment of his neighbour,—every man's own conscience must direct him what portion of this leisure should be allotted to his private devotions, and what may be spent in sober recreation. Perhaps a better general rule cannot be laid down than this,—that the same proportion of the Sabbath, on the whole, should be devoted to religious exercises, public and private, as every man would spend of any other day in his ordinary business. The holy work of the Sabbath, like all other work, to be done well requires intermissions. An entire day is a longer space of time than the human mind can employ with alacrity upon any one subject. The austerity therefore of those is little to be commended, who require that all the intervals of public worship, and whatever remains of the day after the public duty is satisfied, should be spent in the closet, in private prayer and retired meditation. Nor are persons in the lower ranks of society to be very severely censured,—those especially who are confined to populous cities, where they breathe a noxious atmosphere, and are engaged in unwholesome occupations, from which with their daily subsistence they derive their daily poison—if they take advantage of the leisure of the day to recruit their wasted strength and harassed spirits, by short excursions into the purer air of the adjacent villages, and the innocent recreations of sober society ; provided they engage not in schemes of dissipation and tumultuous pleasure, which may disturb the sobriety of their thoughts, and interfere with the duties of the day. The present humour of the common people leads perhaps more to a profanation of the festival than to a superstition, and goes in the observance of

the attempt to reform, we shall do wisely to remember, that the thanks for this are chiefly due to the base spirit of puritanical hypocrisy, which in the last century opposed and defeated the wise attempts of government to regulate the recreations of the day by authority, and prevent the excesses which have actually taken place, by a rational indulgence.

The Sabbath was ordained for a day of public worship, and of refreshment to the common people. It cannot be a day of their refreshment if it be made a day of mortified restraint. To be a day of worship, it must be a day of leisure from worldly business, and of abstraction from dissipated pleasure. But it need not be a dismal one. It was ordained for a day of general and willing resort to the holy mountain; when men, of every race, and every rank, and every age, promiscuously—Hebrew, Greek, and Scythian—bond and free—young and old—high and low—rich and poor—one with another—laying hold of Christ's atonement, and the proffered mercy of the gospel, might meet together before their common Lord, exempt for a season from the cares and labours of the world, and be "joyful in his house of prayer."

SERMON LI.

By BISHOP PORTEUS.

An immoderate Love of Diversions inconsistent with the Duties of a Christian.

2 TIM. iii. 4.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

To what period of time, and to what particular persons, the sacred writer here alludes, it is neither easy nor material to determine. But there is a question which it is very material, and I doubt but too easy, for most of us to answer; whether the description in the text may not be justly applied to ourselves? In whatever sense we take the word pleasures, whether as denoting those which are criminal, or those which

only become so by excess and abuse; it is surely doing us no injury to say, that we love them more than God. At present I shall confine myself to that sort of pleasures which are usually styled innocent; and in a certain degree, and under proper restrictions, undoubtedly are so; I mean the gaieties and amusements of life. If we are not lovers of these pleasures more than lovers of God, if our piety is greater than our dissipation, it must be great indeed. If we served our Maker with half that zeal, half that alacrity and perseverance, with which we pursue our amusements, we should be the most pious nation this day upon earth. But how far this is from being the case, at least with respect to a large proportion of almost every rank of men amongst us, is but too apparent. It is not the living God, it is pleasure that they worship. To this they are idolaters; to this they sacrifice their time, their talents, their fortunes, their health, and too often their innocence and peace of mind. In their haste to enjoy this life, they forget that there is another; they live (as the apostle expresses it) *without God in the world* (Eph. ii. 12.), and their endless engagements not only exclude all love, but all thought of him. However carefully right principles of religion may have been originally planted in their breasts, they have no room to grow up. They are choaked with the pleasures of this world, and bring no fruit to perfection. Invention seems to have been tortured to find out new ways of consuming time, and of being uselessly employed. And there has appeared so wonderful an ingenuity in this respect, that it seems almost impossible for the wit of man to invent, or the life of man to admit, any further additions to this kind of luxury. There are thousands, even of those who would take it very ill to be called vicious, who yet from the time of their rising in the morning to the time of their going to rest at night, never once bestow a single thought upon eternity; nor while they riot in the blessings of Providence, vouchsafe to cast one devout look up to the gracious Author of them, in whom they live, and move, and have their being. (Acts, xvii. 28.)

Nay, I know, would persuade themselves and others, that there can be no harm where there is no actual vice; and that, provided they step not over the bounds of virtue, they cannot be guilty of an excess in pleasure.

But is it true in the first place, that the man of gaiety never does step over the bounds of virtue? Are all those things which go under the name of amusements as perfectly innocent as they are generally represented to be? Is there not one diversion at least (as it called), and one so predominant in the higher ranks of life, that it has swallowed up almost every other, which is big with the most fatal mischief? A diversion, which, far different from the common run of amusements, has no foundation in our natural appetites; no charms to captivate the fancy or the understanding; nothing to make glad the heart of man, to give him a cheerful countenance, and refresh him after the cares and fatigues of duty; but runs counter to reason, sense, and nature; defeats all the purposes of amusement; sinks the spirit instead of raising them; sours the temper instead of improving it; and, when it is carried to its utmost lengths, takes such entire and absolute possession of the soul, as to shut out every other concern both for God and man; extinguishes every generous sentiment; excites the most malignant passions; provokes to the most profane expressions; brings distress, sometimes ruin, upon its wretched votaries, their families, friends, and dependents; tempts them to use unfair, or mean, or oppressive methods of retrieving their affairs; and sometimes to conclude the dismal scene by the last fatal act of desperation. I do not say that gaming always produces these effects; or that it is to all persons, in all circumstances, and in all its various degrees, equally pernicious and unlawful; but it has always a natural tendency to these effects, it always exposes ourselves and others to great danger, and can never be ranked among our innocent amusements. Yet as such it is every day more and more pursued; nay, has even appropriated to itself the name of play; for what reason I know not, unless to play with our lives and fortunes, with

happiness temporal and eternal, be the most delectable of all human enjoyments.

But putting this strange unaccountable passion out of the question, do not even our most allowable diversions sometimes end in sin, though they may not begin with it? Does not an immoderate fondness for these trivial things insensibly weaken and corrupt our hearts, and lead us by imperceptible steps to a number of mind, and a course of action, essentially wrong? The fact is, a state of neutrality in religion, an insipid mediocrity between vice and virtue, though it is what many would be glad to take up with, is an imaginary state; at least, is very seldom, if ever, to be found in a life of gaiety and dissipation. The man who is constantly engaged in the amusements, can scarce ever escape the pollutions of the world. In his eager pursuits of pleasures, he will be sometimes apt to overshoot the mark, and to go further than he ought, perhaps than he intended. Even they who are most in earnest about their future welfare; who have taken care to fortify their minds with the firmest principles of religion; who constantly endeavour to keep alive their hopes and fears of futurity; to guard with the utmost vigilance every avenue of the mind, and secure all the issues of life (Proverbs, iv. 23.); even these, I say are sometimes unable, with all their caution and circumspection, to prevent surprise; with all their strength and resolution to withstand the violence of headstrong passions and desires, which often burst through all restraints, and beat down all the barriers that reason and religion had been a long time raising up against them. What then must be the case when all the impressions of religion are, by the continual attrition of diversions, worn out and effaced; when the mind is stript of all prudential caution; no guard left upon the imagination; no check upon the passions; the natural spring and vigour of the soul impaired, and no supernatural aid to strengthen and support it? What else can be expected, but that we should fall an easy prey to the weakest invader, and yield ourselves up to the slightest temptation? When the unclean spirit cometh, he finds every thing within prepared for his reception,

empty, swept, and garnished; and he taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first (Matt. xii. 44. 45); her begins in gaiety and ends in vice.

Let us, however, take this question up on the most favourable grounds: let us allow it possible for you to run round for ever in the circle of gaiety, without ever once striking into the paths of vice: Is this, do you think, sufficient for salvation? If your amusements as effectually choke the good seed as the rankest weeds of vice, can you with any propriety call them innocent? Do you imagine that God, who is a *jealous God* (Exod. xx. 5.), will bear to be supplanted in your affections by every trifle; or that he will be content with your not taking up arms against him, though you do him not one single piece of acceptable service? The utmost you can plead, is a kind of negative merit, the merit of doing neither good nor harm; and what reception that is likely to meet with, you may judge from the answer given to the unprofitable servant, who produced his talent wrapt up in a napkin, undiminished indeed, but unimproved: *O thou wicked servant, wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?* (Luke, xix. 23.) It is not enough merely to abstain from gross crimes; it is not enough to enjoy yourselves in an indolent harmless tranquillity; to divide matters so nicely as to avoid equally the inconveniences of vice, and the fatigues of virtue; to praise religion in words, to love it perhaps in speculation, but to leave the trouble of practising it to others. This languor and inactivity is a kind of lethargy in the soul, which renders it utterly insensible to the life and spirit of religion. Indifference in any good cause is blameable. In religion, in the Christian religion, it is insupportable. It does violence to the first and fundamental principle of that religion. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength* (Matt. xii. 30.) Go now and let your whole heart, and soul, and mind,

and strength, be engaged in promoting your amusements, and promoting your pleasures, and then lay claim to the rewards of Christianity.

Happy will it be for you, if you can escape its punishments. The gospel, I am sure, gives you no grounds to suppose that you shall. Though you bear no evil fruit, yet if you bear no good, you are involved in the sentence of the fig-tree, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* (Luke, xiii. 7.) To do nothing is in many cases to do a positive wrong, and as such requires a positive punishment. To stand neuter in dangerous commotions of the state, the great Athenian lawgiver declared to be a crime against the state; and in like manner the great Christian lawgiver declares; *he that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.* (Matt. xii. 30.)

Christianity is throughout an active religion; it consists not only in *abstaining from all appearance of evil* (1. Thess. v. 22.); but in *being ready to every good work* (Tit. iii. 1.); and if we stop short at the first, we leave the better half of our business undone. Christ himself went about continually doing good (Acts, x. 38.); and he has prescribed a variety of positive and practical duties to his disciples, as the condition of their salvation; and pressed the performance of these duties upon them with an earnestness and a force of expression that may well alarm the thoughtless and the gay, and make them reflect on the extreme danger of their situation. With regard to God, we are commanded to *believe in him, to fear him, to love him, to worship him, to give him thanks always, to pray without ceasing, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.* With regard to our neighbour, we are to *do good unto all men, to be rich in good works, to be kind and tender-hearted, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to remember them that are in bonds, to minister to the sick, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.* With regard to ourselves, we are enjoined to *be temperate in all things, to keep under our bodies, and bring them into subjection, to set our affections on things above, to wear our*

may ~~we~~ *enter into temptation, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to use all diligence to make our calling and election sure.* Such and so various are the duties pressed upon us in every page of the scriptures. And is this now a religion to be trifled with? Is it not enough to employ every moment we can spare from the indispensable duties of our station, and the necessary refreshments of nature; and how then can it be consistent with that incessant hurry and dissipation, which, intent only on providing a succession of worthless amusements and ignoble gratifications, overlooks every obligation of a man and a christian; and supposes that the whole business of life is not to employ time usefully, but to consume it insignificantly? Can these men seriously imagine that they are all this time *working out their salvation*; that they are *pressing forwards towards the mark for the prize of their high calling* (Phil. iii. 14.); that they are every day drawing nearer and nearer to immortal happiness; and that they shall share the crown of glory with them who have borne the burthen and heat of the day? (Matt. xx. 12.) Is eternal life so very small an object, so extremely cheap a purchase, as to require not the least pains to obtain it? Or is the situation of the rich man represented in scripture to be so perfectly safe and secure, that, while the rest of mankind are enduring afflictions, struggling with difficulties, subduing their passions, and *working out their salvation with fear and trembling*; he, and he only, may neglect all these precautions, may give up his whole time and thoughts to dress, and magnificence, and diversion, and good cheer; may center his whole care in his own dear person, and make it his sole study to gratify every wish of his heart; may leave his salvation to take care of itself, and, as if he had obtained a promise of heaven in reversion, think of nothing but present felicity, and say within himself, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?* (Luke, xii. 19.) ~~Is~~ *not deceived*: this is not virtue; ~~this is not religion~~: this is not christianity. It is, on the contrary, that very

temper of mind, that indolent, soft, luxurious dream of the soul, for which the rich man in the gospel was condemned to *lift up his eyes in torments* (Luke, xvi. 23.); and let those who dread his punishment, be warned by his example.

It is then a fatal mistake, to suppose, that a life of continual gaiety and dissipation, because it is not marked with any notorious crimes, because it does not shock our consciences with palpable guilt, is therefore perfectly innocent. You have by this time seen, I hope, that it is far from being so. You have seen that it naturally leads to, and frequently terminates in, actual vice; that at the least it so totally unmans and enfeebles the soul, as to render it unfit for the reception of religious truths, incapable of exerting its nobler powers, unable to struggle through the common difficulties, or support the common afflictions, of life; and leaves neither time, nor inclination, nor ability, to perform the most important duties of a man, a social being, and a christian.

The truth is, although diversions may serve very well to quicken a palled appetite, they are much too poignant and high-seasoned to be the constant food and nourishment of the soul. They not only destroy our relish for the more plain and simple fare of sobriety and virtue, but lay a foundation for the worst diseases; and though they do not so instantly kill as the deadly poison of vice, yet with a gradual and a fatal certainty, they undermine the vital parts, and sap the constitution.

Beware then of an error, which is the more dangerous, because it is not always perceived, or at least acknowledged, to be an error. And such of you, more especially as are just setting out in life, full of those high spirits and gay imaginations which youth, and rank, and affluence, naturally inspire; beware of giving way to that feverish thirst of pleasure, to that frivolous turn of mind and levity of conduct, which will render all your great advantages useless, and totally defeat every grand purpose of your creation. Do not imagine that you were born to please yourselves only. Do not entertain that false, that destructive notion, that your wealth and time are all your own;

that you may dispose of them exactly as you think fit; may lavish the whole of them on your own pleasures and amusements, without being accountable to any one for the application. There is one, most assuredly, who may, and who has declared that he will, call you to an account, for the use of that leisure and those riches which he bestowed upon you for far other purposes than that mean ignoble one of mere selfish gratification. There are duties of the last importance owing to your families, your friends, your country, your fellow-creatures, your Creator, which you are bound under the most sacred ties to perform; and whatever calls off your attention from these, does from that moment cease to be innocent. Here then is the precise point at which you ought to stop. You may be lovers of pleasure; it is natural, it is reasonable, for you to be so; but you must not be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. This is the true line that separates harmless gaiety from criminal dissipation. It is a line drawn by the hand of God himself, and he will never suffer it to be passed with impunity. He claims, on the justest grounds, the first place in your hearts. His laws and precepts are to be the first object of your regard. And be assured, that by suffering them to be so, you will be no losers even in present felicity. It is a truth demonstrable by reason, and confirmed by invariable experience, that a perpetual round of fashionable gaiety, is not the road to real substantial happiness. Ask those who have tried it, and they will all (if they are honest) with one voice declare, that it is not. It is indeed in the very nature of things impossible that it should be so. This world is not calculated to afford, the human mind is not formed to bear, a constant succession of new and exquisite delights. To aim therefore at uninterrupted, unbounded gaiety, to make pleasure so necessary to your existence, that you cannot subsist one moment without it, is to convert every thing that is not absolute pleasure into absolute pain, and to lay the foundation of certain misery. Diversions are of too thin and unsubstantial a nature to fill the whole capacity of a rational mind, or to satisfy the

cravings of a soul formed for immortality. They must, they do, tire and disgust; you see it every day; you see men flying from one amusement to another; affecting to be happy, yet feeling themselves miserable; fatigued, with pursuing their pleasures, yet uneasy without them; growing sick at last of them all, of their wives, and every thing around them; and compelled perhaps at last to have recourse to solitude, without the least provision made for it; without any fund of entertainment within, to render it supportable. From this wretched state it is that religion would preserve you; and the very worst you have to fear from it, is nothing more than such gentle restraints on your gaiety, as tend to promote the very end you have in view, the true enjoyment even of the present life. Suffer it then to do you this kind office, and do not look on Christianity in that gloomy light, in which it sometimes perhaps appears to you. Far from being an enemy to cheerfulness, it is the truest friend to it. That sober and temperate use of diversions, which it allows and recommends, is the surest way to preserve their power to please, and your capacity to enjoy them. At the same time, though it forbids excess in our pleasures, yet it multiplies the number of them; and disposes the mind to receive entertainment from a variety of objects and pursuits, which to the gay part of mankind are absolutely flat and insipid. To a body in perfect health the plainest food is relishing, and to a soul rightly harmonized by religion every thing affords delight. Rural retirement, domestic tranquility, friendly conversation, literary pursuits, philosophical inquiries, works of genius and imagination; nay even the silent beauties of unadorned nature, a bright day, a still evening, a starry hemisphere, are sources of unadulterated pleasure to those whose taste is not vitiated by criminal indulgences, or debased by trifling ones. And when from these you rise to the still more rational and manly delights of virtue; to that self-congratulation which springs up in the soul from the consciousness of having used your best endeavours to act up to the precepts of the gospel; of having done your utmost,

with the help of divine grace, to correct your infirmities, to subdue your passions, to improve your understandings, to exalt and purify your affections, to promote the welfare of all within your reach, to love and obey your Maker and your Redeemer: then is human happiness wound up to its utmost pitch, and this world has no higher gratifications to give.

Try then, you, who are in search of pleasures, try these among the rest, try, above all others, the pleasures of devotion. Think not that they are nothing more than the visions of a heated imagination. They are real they are exquisite.

They are what thousands have experienced, what thousands still experience, what you yourselves may experience if you please. Acquire only a taste in devotion (as you often do for other things of far less value) in the beginning of life, and it will be your support and comfort through the whole extent of it. It will use you above all low cure, and little gratifications, it will give dignity and nobility to your sentiments, inspire you with fortitude in danger, with patience in adversity, with moderation in property, with alacrity in all your undertakings, with watchfulness over your own conduct, with benevolence to all mankind. It will be so far from throwing a damp on your other pleasures that it will give new life and spirit to them, and make all nature look gay around you. It will be a fresh fund of cheerfulness in store for you, when the vivacity of youth begins to droop, and is the only thing that can fill up that void in the soul, which is left in it by every earthly enjoyment. It will not, like worldly pleasures desert you, when you have most need of consolation, in the hours of solitude, of sickness, of old age, but when once its holy flame is thoroughly lighted up in your breast, instead of becoming more faint and languid as you advance in years, it will grow brighter and stronger every day, will glow with peculiar warmth and lustre, when your dissolution draws near, will dispel the gloom and horrors of a death-bed, will give you a foretaste, and render you worthy to partake of that fullness of joy, those pure celestial pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. (Psalm. xvi. 11.)

SERMON LII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

Vicar of St Giles, Cripplegate, Subdean and Canon of Wells, and Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

Upon reading the Scriptures.

2 TIM. iii. 15.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.

WHOEVER, with a serious conviction, believes that there is a God, infinite in goodness, wisdom, and power, the creator and governor of the world, and that there is another life after this, in which all human actions shall receive an eternal allotment of reward or punishment from his justice, cannot but find himself infinitely concerned to render his conduct acceptable to this Almighty Being, this Sovereign Disposer of happiness or misery, and consequently, to apply himself with the greatest care and attention, to discover what actions will recommend us to his favour, and what will expose us to his displeasure.

How dark and uncertain a progress we could have made in this inquiry, upon the strength of natural reason, we may judge from the errors and superstitions of the heathen world. We have there a certain conviction of the inability of man to trace out the lines of duty, and to prescribe to himself an acceptable service of his Creator. How absurd were their conceptions, and how ridiculous, and even impious, was their worship of the Deity? And though some thoughtful spirits carried their inquiries beyond the common stupidity of the vulgar, and retrieved a tolerable body of moral precepts, yet the most accurate of these systems are chargeable with great imperfections, and at best were confined to the studies of a few speculative persons, while the far greater part of mankind, who had neither leisure nor abilities for these philosophical researches, were left to be carried on in the stream of popular superstition, without any other rules of action, than either their passions and

natural temper, or the prevailing fashions or laws of each country prescribed to them. How invaluable a blessing then must it be to us, to have so exact and infallible a direction of our conduct as the holy scriptures? To have all our doubts and scruples removed, and the measure of our duty ascertained in a full and distinct revelation of the whole will of God? A direction so complete as to reach every occasion of action, so clear and perspicuous, as to be intelligible to all capacities, and which we are encouraged to comply with, by an assurance that it will secure to us our most important interests, will make us wise, even wise unto salvation. In treating the scripture before us, I shall shew,

I. The obligations we are under to apply ourselves to the knowledge of the holy scriptures.

II. The great advantage that will attend this study.

III. The particular happiness of an early education in this knowledge.

IV. I shall recommend some rules to your observance, which may render your applications to this study successful.

And, I. We are obliged to apply ourselves to the knowledge of the holy scriptures, because they are the word of God.

The very first regular deductions of our reason tell us, that since there is an Almighty Being, who made and governs the world, it is of the utmost concern to our happiness, to engage the favour of this supreme power, by doing such things as please, and avoiding such as offend and provoke him. Nay, farther, since God has by right of creation a sovereign title to our obedience, it is not only our greatest interest, but our indispensable duty, to submit all our actions to his pleasure and direction: and since it is impossible for us to obey this will of God without knowing it, it follows, that the first necessary branch of our duty is to inquire what is his will, and endeavour to acquaint ourselves with the particular injunctions of it. These deductions are so natural, that all the religions which have ever appeared in the world, have been founded on these principles, and have been recommended to mankind from the authority of a real, or a pretended, declaration of the divine will. Since,

therefore, God, who communicated his will unto the fathers by the prophets, has in this last dispensation of the gospel fully revealed himself unto us by his Son, and has demanded our obedience to the rules there prescribed to us, on peril of eternal damnation, it becomes a duty of the highest importance and obligation to us, to acquaint ourselves with the extent and meaning of that revelation. If the Gentile world, who had no other knowledge of God and his will, than they could collect from his visible works of the creation, and the light of unassisted reason, were left without excuse, for not attending sufficiently to the directions of that light; how shall we escape, if, when God has fully revealed to us his will, by the ministry of his evangelists and apostles, and given us his full and final instructions concerning our duty, how shall we escape, if we neglect to improve so much greater means of salvation? Since the Almighty has spoke from heaven, let the earth keep silence, and tremble at his word; since God has lift up his voice, let not man shut his ears, nor turn away his heart from attending to it. In vain has the Son of God come down from heaven, and declared the will of his Father; in vain did he send his apostles, and in vain have they preached in obedience to that mission, and committed to writing that gospel which they preached; in vain has the providence of God preserved and continued down to the church that sacred treasure of wisdom, if, after all, men are at liberty to slight or attend to it at their pleasure.

God indeed may, by an immediate and particular revelation, make known to us his will, without our application to this written declaration of it: but since he has now given us a standing complete system of all the truths he requires us to believe, and of all the duties it is his pleasure we should practise; it is a most unreasonable presumption in any man, to expect that God should miraculously convey that knowledge to him; which it was in his power, by an easy application, to have obtained. God has now written his will in fair characters, and it is our duty to acquiesce in this revelation, to seek thence the directions of our Creator,

and the measures of that obedience we owe him. This obligation indeed is not equal to all men. For there is an order set apart for this purpose, separate and removed from common uses, and by their office more especially dedicated to this employment. And though it is an universal duty on all Christians to be conversant in the holy scriptures, yet some men have added farther to this general obligation, by a solemn devotion of their lives to this service.

But though the priests be the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, though their lips should especially preserve knowledge, and at their mouths the people should seek the law; and though their office more eminently requires them to be mighty in the scriptures, yet their ministry is not intended to excuse the negligence, or render useless the application, of others; but to assist their weakness, direct their ignorance, and encourage their assiduity in so excellent a study. Every private man is also obliged, by name and character, as a Christian, to set before his eyes this word of God, to search the holy scriptures for the proper motives and directions of duty, and apply his attainments to the promotion of his own and his neighbour's happiness. When the Almighty gave a law to the house of Israel, by the hand of his servant Moses, though one tribe was taken and separated from the congregation for the service of the sanctuary, to bless in the name of the Lord, and to teach the people; yet the rest were not therefore excused, much less excluded from the study of his precepts. God did not take from them the key of knowledge, nor shut up the kingdom of heaven from any who were inclined to enter in. *Hear, O Israel! (says he,) the words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.* And agreeably we find our Saviour, in his disputes with the Jews, ge-

nerally appealing to the scriptures, and referring his hearers to the books of Moses and the prophets, as writings of common and public recourse, and such as every one was not only allowed, but bound, to be acquainted with. And I think it may very justly be inferred from my text, that the scriptures were permitted to the people in the Jewish church, since they are here said to have been known and studied by Timothy, from his very childhood; for I imagine, the scriptures here referred to by the apostle, to have been the books of the Jewish canon; because the time in which he is mentioned to have known them, was probably before his or his mother's conversion, and when few, if any, of the Christian scriptures were published or written. But if any one will understand the apostle of any evangelical writings, the conclusion will be, that St. Paul allowed and commended Timothy's application to the knowledge of the scriptures, when he was yet but a child, many years before he was ordained to the ministry: but at present I infer no more from it, but that in the Jewish church there was no such thing as a prohibition from reading the scriptures, but that all, even women and children, were allowed, encouraged, and commended, in that study. And that no such restraint was intended to be laid upon men by the gospel, is plain from several considerations.

1st, It is observable, that the scriptures of the New Testament were written in a language, at that time, the most universally read and understood of any in the world, and that by men whose native language it was not. Now, if the apostles and evangelists had designed to have excluded any number of men from reading the scripture, they would never have made use of an universal language, but have locked it up in some of those unknown or uncommon tongues they were masters of. Or, if their books had been written even in their own tongue, they would indeed have been of popular use in Judea, and a few of the eastern regions; but in all the rest of the world, the knowledge of them would have been confined to a small number of persons. Few would have taken the pains to learn a difficult foreign tongue, without the least affinity to their

own, and few would have had leisure or capacity for such laborious applications. But, on the contrary, we find that the apostles, as they designed the salvation of all, so they wrote the books which were to direct men to salvation, in a language at that time spoken by almost all the world; and that the lowest education should not be excluded from the knowledge of them, these books were in a short time translated into several languages, and every nation heard them speak in their own tongue, wherein they were born, the wonderful works of God.

2dly; If the apostles had designed to restrain any number of their converts from reading their works, they would have left some express prohibition of it. Had it been a thing of so much danger to Christianity, as the church of Rome pretends, the qualifications had been defined of those who were to be trusted with this perilous liberty, and the rest excluded, or at least discouraged from the attempt by proper representations of the hazard that would attend it. But on the contrary, their writings are directed to all; and particularly the evangelist St. John directs his gospel, not only to a few select disciples, but to all Christians, for the instruction and confirmation of their faith; that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing, they might have life through his name. The epistles of St. Paul were intended, most of them, for the use of all the saints in those places to which they were sent, and are expressly inscribed to all the faithful in Christ Jesus; *to all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, as well as the bishops and deacons.* St. Peter indeed tells us, that there were many things in his brother Paul's epistles, *which they who were unlearned and unstable wrested, as they did also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.* But this can never be interpreted as a prohibition; on the contrary, it is plain, from this, that those holy writings, even the most difficult of them, were not in the apostles' time taken out of the hands even of the ignorant and unlearned, since they are here charged with the abuse of them. Neither does the apostle exclude them from any fu-

ture access to these writings, but only gives men of inferior capacities the prudent and reasonable caution, that they should have a careful reading these scriptures, lest they should misinterpret any place, to the understanding of which more learning is required than they are masters of. But they should be especially careful; lest from want of steadfastness in their faith, they let themselves loose to raise new doctrines and opinions thence, and so disturb the peace, and divide the unity, of the Christian church.

But it is unreasonable from this, to grant the like caution, to conclude they ought wholly to be denied looking into these writings. The great and necessary truths of the gospel, and the main lines of our duty, are drawn there fair and strong, and he that runneth may read them. The meanest capacity, as it is concerned to know, so it is very well able to comprehend the import and extent of them; and if they will not be too forward of themselves to determine the sense of the more difficult places; but either leave it to those whose peculiar study it is, or apply themselves to them to be informed in the meaning of them, with these cautions they will be secured from all danger, and blessed with such a knowledge of their religion, as is absolutely necessary to a rational profession of it. On the contrary, totally to prohibit the reading these treasures of eternal life, is like taking away a traveller's chart and compass, because there is a possibility that in some parts of his journey he may mistake the use of them, and so lose his way. The proper remedy his guide should apply in such a case is, to give him good directions, to point out to him the places where he is most apt to be misled, and shew how he may avoid the dangers of them; but taking away his rule, is either obliging him to sit still, or leaving him to the casual direction of those he meets on the way, where he will be infinitely more exposed to error, from their ignorance or knavery, than he could be by following a rule which is every where pure and intelligible, in all the most material parts of it; and where it is not so, we are easily secured from much danger in our mistakes. In sum, the holy scriptures

all the only sure guide to our feet, 'and lantern to our path; and it is not only the privilege, but the duty of every Christian, to follow the direction of this light. A light which discovers to us all we are concerned to know, in order to be happy? A study which is able to make us wise in our most important interest, even wise unto salvation which is the

Ild General I proposed to speak to. And the proof of this will irresistibly infer both our duty and liberty to apply ourselves to this study, for if it be every man's duty to endeavour to attain salvation, and the reading and studying the scriptures be the readiest method to secure to us that attainment, it follows that it is every man's bounden duty, as well as greatest interest, to apply himself to this saving knowledge, these words of eternal life.

Now this was the only end of God's revealing his will, that mankind, who had long wearied themselves in dark and fruitless searches after happiness should be directed to a felicity suited to the dignity of our nature, and equal to the desires of an immortal being. In vain had men trod all the intricate mazes of philosophy, seeking rest but finding none. Inextricable difficulties perplexed all their speculations, and in the result of all their disputes and inquiries after happiness, they were left as little satisfied, either what to wish for, or how to pursue it, as when they began. They felt and lamented weaknesses, for which they had no remedy, were conscious of sins for which they knew not where to apply for pardon, were without assurance in their hopes, and without comfort in their fears. But now that life and immortality, which was in vain sought after in the paths of natural wisdom, is brought to light by the gospel. In the scriptures, the prospect is clearly opened to our faith, and the duties that lead to it distinctly proposed to our practice. We are there informed what spiritual enemies we are exposed to in our journey, what attempts we may expect from their power, and by what arms and conduct we may defeat their malice. We

have there remedies prescribed and adapted to all our infirmities; the weary may there find refreshments, and the heavy-laden relief; and every weak and dejected spirit is supplied with proper consolations. Our repentance is there assured of pardon, and our sincere the duties of our religion of salvation.

And methinks a Christian should find no exhortation to apply himself to important and excellent study, the gospel proposed to us only as a great speculation, as a discovery of the nature of God and spiritual beings, as an hypothesis that decided those great questions, of the rewards of virtue, and the immortality of the soul, accounted for all the mysteries of Providence, and proposed remedies for all the weaknesses of our nature, methinks our curiosity itself should find entertainment enough to engage us in so noble a theory. But when we consider it is the word of life, as a system proposed to our faith and observance, on peril of evilisting damnation, with what zeal and assiduity should we apply ourselves to a study of such moment to our happiness, of such infinite concern to our souls? All other researches, when compared with this, will appear but as impertinent amusements of our time. Though we have read and digested volumes of philosophy; though we are acquainted with the histories of all ages, and are able to judge of the interests and policies of kingdoms; yet if we are ignorant of this one necessary part of knowledge, our wisdom is but folly, and all our learning but a reputable vanity. We have laid out our money for that which is not bread, and toiled for that which will profit us nought.

Let us then labour to be wise for ourselves, to be wise unto salvation. Let our daily study be in the statutes of God, and let his testimonies be our delight and our counsils. Let us read and meditate on the words of that wisdom which came from above the wisdom of the Father of all lights, whom to know and obey is eternal life.

SERMON LIII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

Upon reading the Scriptures.

2 Tim. III. 15.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.

In my former observations on this text I endeavoured to convince you,

1st, Of the obligations incumbent on all Christians to read and study the holy scriptures.

2dly, To encourage you in these applications, from the great advantages derived on us by them.—They will make us wise, even wise unto salvation.

But because some rules are necessary to be observed by us, to render the performance of this duty effectual to this great end; and to prevent those inconveniences which the church of Rome pretends to remedy, by prohibiting men from reading the scriptures, I proceed,

3dly, To prescribe some rules for our direction in this instance of duty.

Now, though a great variety of rules may be given for this purpose, it may be generally sufficient that we observe these:

I. That we read the scriptures frequently.

II. With attention.

III. With reverence.

IV. Without prejudice. And,

I. We must read the scriptures frequently, because from hence we shall receive the greatest assistances in understanding them. One of the best lights in interpreting what is difficult or obscure in these writings is, the comparison of one place or expression with another: now this cannot be done without a comprehensive knowledge of the scriptures, without being able to recollect the similitude of sense or expression, and readily to refer ourselves from one place to another, and this ability can no other way be obtained, than by a frequent attending on this study. Another advantage we may expect from assiduity in this study is, that that reluctance and disaffection with which men are ob-

served to decline and shift off this employment, will, by an habitual attendance on it, be worn off, and the duty engage us to it with pleasure and delight. How often indeed any one should apply himself to this duty, or how long continue in it, it is impossible by any general rules precisely to determine. The variety of circumstances and conditions of life is duly to be considered. One man may deserve the character of a diligent reader, while another, who is not less constant, may be guilty of remissness and negligence, if his manner of life and education give him more opportunities of attending this duty. Some men's calling, and constant labour for the necessary supplies of life, engage so large a share of their time, that they have no leisure for reading or meditation; whilst others, by the bounty of Providence, are exempted from the necessity of labouring with their own hands for their support, and have consequently more time for religious employments. Now from him who has much given, much is required; but God has not made the supplies of life so difficult to any station, but that the most engaged may find some hours of leisure for an attendance on this duty. One day at least in seven the most necessitous is discharged from his worldly employments, and required to devote himself to the service of religion; and as the intervals of divine worship on that day give us the fairest opportunities for reading and meditation, so it is a sacrilege without excuse, either to trifle them away in idleness, or profane them by secular applications. In sum, every man must be faithful and true to himself: his own conscience will inform him whether he be any time remiss in this duty or not. If he finds it a trouble to him to read and study the holy scriptures; if he frames excuses, and purposely engages himself either in business or diversion, to shift off this duty, he has reason to suspect himself of disaffection to God and his service; his own heart will remind him of his guilt, and God, who is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things, will not be imposed on by frivolous excuses. One would imagine, since these scriptures are acknowledged to be the

rule and measure of our actions, we should care to have them always open before our eyes, to fix them in our minds by repeated applications, and to be able, in every difficulty that occurs, to refer ourselves to this decisive standard of good and evil. But especially, since these scriptures are the words of eternal life, and the sure guide to salvation, no time should be thought too much, and no labour too great, to acquaint ourselves with their direction. This was the study that employed the royal Psalmist in all his retirements. The law of the Lord was his delight, and all the day long was his study in it. This was the knowledge he recommends to us, as more to be desired than gold, and more earnestly to be sought for than fine gold. And if the law, which was only the shadow of good things to come, deserved so high a character, and gave so much encouragement to the study of it, how much more should the writings of the gospel engage our applications, in which life and immortality are brought to light, in which our hopes are assured of everlasting felicity, and our actions directed to the attainment of it! But if we expect these advantages from the study of the scriptures, we must

II. Read them with attention. Without this indeed, barely to run over the words of scripture, in a negligent, cursory manner, is a profane disregard to the Almighty Author, whose name they bear. We owe so much respect to every common writer, whom we think ourselves concerned to read, though the subject he treats of be of less importance to us, as to allow him a fair and attentive reading, how much more then is this a duty, when the words we are reading are the words of God, when the matter they treat of is no less than our eternal happiness or misery? How little then do we regard either the majesty of the author or the importance of the subject, when with a careless precipitation we hurry over some portion of the scripture, merely because we are accustomed at such a time and such a place to do so, and dispatch it as a burdensome task imposed on us, which we want to get rid of as fast as we can? To what purpose, or with what prospect of im-

provement, can we read a book, the sense of which we never attend to? It is indeed equally disrespectful to these sacred oracles entirely to throw them by, and to read them with such a negligent indifference, as defeats the ends for which they are written, and without that holy spirit whose authority they bear. 'A due reverence,' which is the

III Qualification I prescribed, and indeed secure us from falling into these abuses of negligence or inattention. By reverence, I understand that humility of mind which is due from us to our great Creator, that submission and subjection of our hearts and understandings to his divine will, which disposes us readily to comply with whatsoever he proposes to us, whether it concerns our faith or practice. So that if God reveals any truth, and commands us to believe it, we presently, and without scruple, give our assent to it, though the proposition revealed be above our capacities clearly to comprehend. To a good Christian, this is a sufficient proof of any article, that God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed it in his word. He does not reply against God, and raise doubts and questions within himself, and too curiously inquire, how can these things be, because it is impossible our finite capacities should have an exact and adequate idea of the nature and attributes of an infinite being. It is therefore our duty to submit our scriptures to the authority of the revealer, the proposition may be true, notwithstanding all objections, and since God has commanded our assent, we are bound to believe it. Should the authority of divine revelation indeed be pretended for any thing directly contradictory to the plain principles of reason, such as the doctrine of transubstantiation, it were supererogation, and not faith, to assent to it. This is a subject of which our faculties are proper judges, and if we cannot be sure that this is false, we cannot be sure that any thing is true; and therefore it is rudeness, and not reverence, to interpret the divine words in such a sense, as exposes them to the contempt of all considerate inquirers. Where there is a possibility of the proposition being true, the divine authority must decide the

question. This grace of holy reverence is that temper of soul to which God has promised to impart himself in the finest communications. To the meek, mysteries are revealed; to him will God discover the hidden treasures of that wisdom which is from above. *Thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool; but to this man will I look, to him who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* We must not exalt ourselves against God, and make our finite reason the measure of truth and duty. We must not search for the complete law of our faith and actions in our own understandings, but in the holy scriptures, which are to be looked on and revered by us, not as the words of men, but, as they are in truth, the word of God.

But besides this reverence to God the author, there is a farther instance of our humility to be shewn, in not being too hasty and peremptory of ourselves, to determine the meaning and sense of the holy scriptures. They were, indeed, every part of them, written for instruction, and every where contain something useful and fit to be known; but then, what is absolutely necessary to be known by all, is easy to be understood by all, and is obvious and intelligible to ordinary capacities. In the mean time, there are not a few places which the wisest and best men cannot readily explain; and others which they shall never be able to interpret, till the appointed time shall come, when God shall think fit to open our eyes, and let us see clearly these sacred mysteries. With great caution therefore and humility should the ignorant and unlearned proceed, to whom many more places must be difficult and unintelligible, than to those who have greater capacities, and who have applied themselves to the study of them. I am far from desiring that any one should implicitly resign himself to the sentiments of another man, how great or how knowing soever. He cannot, by any authority, be obliged to understand any words in scripture in such a sense as makes the proposition evidently false, because no authority can be argument of equal weight with the plain evidence of the thing. But then it is manifest, that he

who has not learning must, in many instances of his inquiry into the sense of difficult places, be, in the result, determined by some authority or other; and when there is an order of men, qualified with all the learning that is necessary for such inquiries, and who have set themselves apart to this particular study, and are by proper authority appointed to be guides to other men, it is but reasonable that those of less abilities and opportunities of knowledge, should first consult them, and prefer their authority to any other, to persons not so qualified, or not so appointed.

Upon the whole, this general rule should be observed; whatsoever is necessary for every man to understand, is plain to every man; and if persons of inferior capacities would content themselves with understanding and practising what is plain in the scriptures, they would perhaps do all that is strictly required of them; but if they will be curious, or have a real occasion to inquire into the meaning of more difficult places, it certainly becomes their humility to consult those whom they may modestly presume to know more than themselves. Let every one apply himself first to the study and practice of the most plain and obvious scriptures; and if his desire of divine knowledge carry him farther, let him, with the modesty of the eunuch in the Acts, desire some one of more capacity, to lead and keep him, lest he wander out of the way. The apostle assigns this very reason to the Ephesians, of God's establishing the several orders of the ministry in the church, that they should no more be carried about with every wind of doctrine, but have a rational, though not infallible, recourse in their knowledge, for the solution of their doubts, in any question of faith or practice.

The IVth rule to be observed in consulting the scriptures is, to read them without prejudice; a fault we shall never avoid, unless we observe the former rule, and approach those sacred oracles with reverence and humility, with an open heart, and a teachable disposition.

The word of God must have its free course. To put a force upon the scriptures, and constrain them to declare on

our side, and speak what they never intended in fighting against God, and doing violence to the Holy Spirit; and of this every one is guilty who comes to those writings with prejudice and prepossession. He gives a law to the scriptures, instead of making them the rule of his faith and actions; he is desirous that some beloved opinion should be true, and is therefore determined to find it there written: or he is unwilling to part with some favourite sin, and therefore resolves to find no law against it. Be the precept never so plain, he has still some distinction in reserve, which avoids its force, and eludes its meaning. This is a vice of the greater danger to us, because it slides insensibly into our mind, and often prevails there most when it is least perceived. He is happiest who is least enslaved, for I am afraid no one is wholly free and out of its power.

Who is there who does not incline one way or the other, and would not be glad that this or that side of the question was true, antecedently to the consideration of any law or reason to determine his judgment? Who is there that does not take up something without ground, and upon trust; which because he has once espoused, he is resolved, at all adventures, afterwards to maintain? To a man thus prepossessed, it happens well, if by chance he is in the right; for if it be otherwise, he is hardly to be reclaimed. In every line he reads he finds something that sounds like an argument for his cause, and favours his opinion; and when the scales are held thus partially uneven, the slightest probabilities have the weight of demonstration.

This large and absolute is the dominion of prejudice; and, what is still the worst circumstance of this disease, the infection is found most where it least of all should appear, in the inquiries of religion. With what obstinacy may we see the heretic persist in his mistake, and how unwillingly is he brought to retract what he has once asserted? With what shifts and evasions will he put by the evidence of truth? And what weak pretences will he lay hold of to maintain an opinion he has undertaken to defend? And even at last, when he can support it no longer by argument, he is often as

far from owning his error as before. He will hold out against the clearest light, and resist even conviction itself. But this is a temper which must unavoidably deprive us of all the advantages of our reading and application; and how far soever we are under the dominion of this passion, so far we are unqualified for the study of the holy scriptures. To these qualifications I will add but one thing more as necessary, and that is fervent prayer to Almighty God, that he would assist our applications with his Holy Spirit; that he open our understandings, enlighten our ignorance, and lead us into the knowledge of his truth, and give us grace, that we may in such wise hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest his holy word, that the fruit of them may appear in an orthodox faith, and a regular practice of all Christian graces.

But there is still one thing farther the apostle recommends to us in the words of my text; and that is,

4thly, An early education in this study.

The first advantage I shall mention, of being applied to this study when we are children, is, that then we generally read under the direction of a guide, who can explain the doctrines, recommend the precepts, preserve us from error, and encourage us in duty.

For though God has appointed the ministers of his word to be as fountains of knowledge for the recourse of his people, to be at all times ready to assist their ignorance in whatever difficulties may occur to them in the study of these oracles; yet when men are arrived to the age of manhood, they are either too much ashamed to own their ignorance, to apply for these assistances, or too confident of their own abilities to believe they want them: it is therefore of great advantage to us to be inured to these directions, when the mind is humble and modest, and disposed to receive and obey instruction.

But the happiness of an early education in this knowledge, will more de-

terminedly be considered its fertility in us with those directions recommended as necessary to give success to this study. And

1st, What we apply ourselves to in our early years, will particularly engage our

attention. The first passions that appear in the soul are insatiable desires of knowledge and happiness. While the capacities are empty and unfurnished, the novelty of every thing proposed to us, and the authority of the teacher, imprint the subject on our mind in the deepest characters, and command the attention of every faculty: but especially, if it is represented to us as a subject of great importance to our felicity, the mind is then eager and importunate in its inquiries, and every capacity of the soul is opened to receive its direction to happiness. But when this study has been neglected in our minority, our thoughts are distracted, by a variety of other speculations, we are prepossessed in favour of other schemes of happiness, and it is with reluctance we are brought to hearken to any fresh proposals. And as what we are employed in when children, particularly engages our attention; so,

2dly, It is received with peculiar impressions of awe and veneration. Father and master are names of so much authority with us, in that governable part of our life, that whatever system of religion, or rule of action, they propose to our observance, is revered as infallible. It is then the scriptures are most effectually recommended to us, under the venerable character of the word of God; and the natural force of education will incline us to treat them with the same respect in the future part of our lives. If indeed we consider the force of an early education in the knowledge of the scriptures, with regard to the fourth qualification I prescribed for reading them, a freedom from prejudice, the same arguments that recommend it as a foundation of reverence, seem equally to dissuade it as the occasion of all those prejudices, which afterwards obstruct the freedom of our inquiries. But this, only is an accidental effect, and may be very much prevented by the care of our first directors. Or if it be impossible (as I am afraid it is) to preserve the mind clear from all prepossessions, this indeed is an argument for choosing persons of knowledge and honesty, to be employed in this province, and eminent for their care and assiduity in the discharge of it; but when this

is provided for, it is certainly an insupportable happiness to the child to be engaged on the side of truth, and furnished with a set of principles, which the strictest examinations of his reason must afterwards approve and confirm.

But it is farther observable, that the ill effect of these early prejudices appears chiefly in the speculative points of religion. The practical rules indeed of the scripture are so clear and obvious, that neither the instructor nor the pupil can easily mistake them. It is only from habits of vice, and an unwillingness to find a favourite passion disapproved, that we are induced to prevaricate with the precepts of scripture; and consequently, since an early education in the knowledge and esteem of them, is the most effectual method to inure us to the practice of those duties they prescribe, it must be acknowledged as the likeliest means to secure us from mistake, in assigning the meaning of them. Nay, farther, if we examine into the reasons of men's obstinacy in the defence even of those speculative errors, it will be often found that either the errors themselves are such as tend to palliate some practical immorality, or that men adhere to them rather out of pride, and affectation of singularity, or a disdain of retracting what they have once asserted, than from a serious and rational persuasion of the truth of them: and consequently, since, as I observed, an early education in the study of the scriptures is the most probable method to engage us to practise that meekness, humility, and the other moral graces they prescribe; it is a remedy equally effectual to preserve us from the greater part of these speculative errors, and whatever mistake can consist with the sincere exercise of these virtues, is of no great danger to our happiness, and consequently of no great concern whether it be prevented or not.

Upon the whole, as the study of the scriptures is in general commanded to all men, so an early application to this study is particularly encouraged and recommended to us. This is the proper season of discipline and instruction; and whoever, through misfortune or negligence, has wanted this direction, this

early years, must return back to the modesty and humility of that age, before he is qualified to receive the doctrines of the gospel. *Verily, verily, (says our Saviour) whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* To conclude,

The holy scriptures are the noblest and most entertaining employment of every period of our age, and every condition of our life. We may there hear God speak to us and live. We have there the most infallible directions to duty, and the most animating encouragements in the performance of it. Every infirmity of our nature is there prescribed its proper remedy, and every affliction of life is supplied with proper consolations. The just is there confirmed, the sinner reclaimed, and the penitent revived with offers of pardon; and every sincere and faithful servant of Jesus Christ is supported in all the difficulties and labours of obedience, with the assurance of a glorious immortality.

SERMON LIV.

By Dr. ROGERS.

The Folly of making a Mock at Sin.

Prov. xiv. 9.

Fools make a Mock at Sin.

It is methinks a little mortifying to the profane and irreligious, who set up for more refined parts, more accurate thinking, and a deeper penetration than other men, to find so great and so wise a prince as Solomon, who had considered human life with so much attention, constantly ranking them under an opposite character, and treating them as fools. This imputation he not only asserts, but proves from a particular examination of their principles and conduct; and in my text takes it from this instance of their folly, their making a mock at sin.

By which it is not meant, that they affect to expose the vices of their own life and practice as absurd and ridiculous. No, the gallery is directed against the laws of virtue and religion, which forbid

them. The actions prohibited by these laws are ready enough to explain and defend; but what they undertake to make a mock at is the sin, the consideration of these actions under this frightful idea, and being deterred from the commission of them as forbidden by God.

One would wonder indeed, what motive should induce the libertine part of the world to be so solicitous as they are, either to argue or laugh the rest of mankind out of the restraints of virtue and religion. The interest even of their vices themselves seems rather to persuade of other conduct. For it is certainly a great advantage to them, in their pursuits of the honours, the wealth, or pleasures of life, to have other men limited by fixed and stated rules; to know exactly within what bounds they are confined; how far they can go, and where they must stop; and to be able to ascertain the point, beyond which they are secure from their competition, while they themselves are free from all rules; and at liberty to make use of any expedients that appear conducive to their designs. But here lies the secret: the libertine can have no rational conviction, and consequently no rational acquiescence, in the principles he acts on. A consciousness of guilt and its natural attendant, shame, hang about him, do what he can. To guard against these troublesome sentiments which haunt and interrupt his pleasures, he finds it necessary to gain the applause and approbation of men to his conduct. It is the peculiar privilege of virtue and innocence to be able to stand alone. He who is secure in the approbation of God, can despise the scorn and contradiction of the whole world; but wickedness is naturally timorous. The libertine finds himself unsupported from within, and is therefore solicitous to confirm his diffidence, and remove his shame, by the countenance and esteem of men. Now while the fear of God, and the reverence of his laws, retain their due force in the world, these men are sure of being marked out with general abhorrence and detestation. Before they can expect any favourable regard or credit with mankind, they must dispossess them of these rigid principles, and soften their aver-

signs from sin. And by what methods must this be effected? Serious reasoning the cause of vice will not bear; but if they can give a ludicrous turn to the argument, and, by a mixture of wit with their profaneness, raise a laugh on their side; they succeed as far as they desire; for they know very well, that what men can be prevailed on to laugh at, they are not apt, in any great degree, either to hate or fear. Their dread of sin, and aversion from the sinner, will be gradually lessened by these impressions; and if, under any character, we can be reconciled to the friendship, and be pleased with the conversation of the criminal, we shall not be very much offended with his crimes. To correct this profane levity in those who are guilty of it, and to guard others from its impression, I shall endeavour to confirm the assertion of Solomon, That it is extreme folly thus to make a mock at sin.

But first, it may be proper to premise, that these mockers at sin may be distinguished under two characters. Either they are such as ridicule all fear of offending God, and in consequence all religion, as weakness and superstition; and these can be no other than professed atheists: or such as care not to go quite so great a length as this. Some crimes they will acknowledge to expose us to the anger of God, and to be justly odious to men; but others, such as they indulge in their own practice, or would encourage in others, they represent as light and trivial escapes; matters of jest rather than of conscience, and not deserving a serious consideration. But the folly of both these attempts against religion must appear, if we consider,

I. What sin is.

II. What consequences must attend making a mock or jest of it.

Now sin, in the notion which religion gives of it, is the transgression of a reasonable, holy, and righteous law, prescribed to our conduct by the Author of our being, on whose pleasure all that we have, and all that we hope for, depends; the reproach of our reason, which it contradicts; the abhorrence of our God, whose power and authority it defies, and whose guilt, no less a sacrifice than the blood of the Son of God himself could expiate.

Consider it in its effects, and we find it the parent and cause of all the misery we either feel or fear. It was sin that degraded our nature from the perfection in which it was created; that debased us from a glory little inferior to the angels, into that weak, passionate, and ignorant creature we now are; that brought death into the world, and opened all the paths of sorrow that lead to it. All these are the fruits and wages of sin. But it has still more terrible effects than these: it pursues us into another world, and will there be attended with everlasting penalties; horror and torments which shall never have an end. And can this dreadful evil be a proper subject for sport and drollery? Can we permit ourselves to laugh at what enrages the anger of our God against us, what nailed our friend and patron to the cross, what daily crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame, and what, unless atoned for by the tears of repentance, will ruin our whole nature, and cast both body and soul into hell?

To him who calls himself a Christian, sin, under these characters, must appear the most hateful and terrible of all evils. If he believes that gospel which he professes, he knows that the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven, against all unrighteousness of men; that no sin shall escape the notice or resentment of his Judge, but be avenged in eternal inflictions. When he reflects on these serious truths, he will find little inclination to treat any sin as a light and ludicrous thing; and make a jest at what may possibly be his own or another's damnation. The atheistical scoffers at sin indeed make a mock at these consequences of it too; ridicule them as mormos invented to frighten mankind; the artifices of the crafty, or the dreams of superstition. But, alas! they will one day find that there is a God, just and terrible in his judgments! When all their jollity shall be changed into trembling, and their laughter into weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In the mean time, let us condescend so far to the libertine, as to argue with him upon his own principles. Let us consider sin only under its present consequences; and see whether he be so wise as he thinks himself, in making a mock at it.

Now, what is it that embroils human society, disturbs the peace, order, and happiness of the world, but sin? Whence come wars, and fightings among us, discord and contention, fraud and oppression, and all the sad effects of malice, envy, avarice, or revenge, but from the ungoverned lusts and passions of men? The far greater part of the complaints of the miserable, when traced to their proper source, will be found to arise either from their own, or other men's transgressing the laws of God. To laugh at sin therefore is to laugh at misery, to laugh where a wise man ought to mourn. It argues indeed somewhat worse than folly, a baseness and inhumanity of temper, and an enmity to mankind, for a man to delight and sport himself with public mischief. Should we see a man playing with serpents, and jesting with scorpions, could we be diverted with the sight? Would not the natural passions arising in us upon such a sight, be pity for the ignorance, and concern for the danger, of the man? Or if we apprehend any malice in the action, a design to persuade others to venture on these perilous liberties, should we not abominate the wickedness of the intention, and with zeal and indignation oppose the success of it? And can we with patience behold a profane wretch playing with the sting of death, endeavouring to abolish the dread of sin, and persuade men to divert themselves with present misery, and future damnation? Folly, in its common notion, is too mild and gentle an imputation for such a conduct; we must aggravate the idea, and add to it some odious and detestable images, before it will express it. That even in its highest and worst sense, it will properly be applied to this practice, will farther appear to us, if we

II. Consider the consequences of making a mock at sin.

Now the general consequences of this practice must be the prevailing of sin and unrighteousness in the world. The passions of mankind lead them, by a strong propensity, to what is forbidden. Our appetites are always calling upon us to reach out our hand, and taste something out of the inviting scene of pleasure that passes by us; and the devil is ever suggesting to us, we may do it safely, we

shall not surely die; and all the fences and guards of religion are found little enough to withhold our compliance. All the restraint we are or can be under is from them. Were it not for the fear of offending God, exposing ourselves to his displeasure, and incurring the penalties of his laws, every kind of wickedness would soon prevail, and, like a torrent which has broke its bounds, overspread the face of the earth; and consequently, whatever weakens these restraints, must, in the same proportion, occasion the increase and overflowing of all ungodliness. Now what can more effectually contribute to this evil than making a mock at sin, laughing at that formidable notion under which it ought to be considered, and representing it only as a petty indiscretion, a light and ludicrous thing? The idea of the action is perfectly changed by this disguise; the proper penalties of it are hid out of sight, and only a trifling inconvenience from the railery of men substituted in the place of them. A penalty (if it may be called one) which will give the sinner but little apprehension, for few are disposed to think they want wit; and if they can but turn the jest upon such a reprover as this, they are sufficiently guarded against any uneasiness they can fear from him. The fear of God, and the dread of his resentments, are (as I observed) the only effectual restraints from sin. But to keep up the sense and impression of this principle, it is necessary that men should every where meet with some apparent effects of it. When they see, in all about them, a reverent apprehension of the divine presence and authority; when they hear them, on all occasions, express an awful regard to his laws, and instead of laughter or applause, entertain the transgression of them with serious reproof and abhorrence, it gives a quick and lively influence to the fear of God. It will reclaim the modest, and check even the most profligate sinner. The very shame of appearing less conscientious, less restrained from wickedness than other men, will at least correct the open insolence of impiety, and keep the public example within some bounds of decency and sobriety. But when the transgressions of God's laws are agreed where made light of; when in the world

fashion, to treat sin only as a matter of jest, and pleasantry, neither shame nor conscience will be able to preserve their proper force. The libertine will no longer affect to conceal his crimes, and even the virtuous will be tempted to commit of their zeal, abate their opposition, and, by an undue compliance with the stream, avoid the reproach of affectation and singularity.

It is to be hoped indeed, that the natural reluctances of reason and conscience, will generally guard men against the scoffers of the first kind; the open atheists, who ridicule all fear of God, all restraints of virtue and religion, and, in effect, all distinctions of good and evil. Mankind must be corrupt, even beyond example, before they can, with pleasure or patience, endure such insults on common sense and virtue. But there are mockers of another character, whose success is more to be feared; men who will permit you to keep a reserve of religion, will pretend to agree with you in detesting some crimes, but persuade you to think others only ludicrous amusements, which it is weakness and superstition to abstain from yourselves, and a morose, unconvertible severity to censure in your neighbours. Now this is a temptation to which we are exceedingly open. We are fond of any overture of compounding matters with God, and will give him any equivalent for a favourite sin; and therefore, when we are persuaded to believe the sins to which the solicitations of friends, popular fashion, or our own appetites, particularly lead us, to be trifles of no moment; and that other observances, from which we have no aversion, will secure to us the expectations of duty, the delusion is not easily resisted. But how fatal must the consequences of these notions be to public virtue, wherever they are entertained? For, while every one will be for bringing his own vices within the indulgence as trifles, not meriting a serious regard, whatever restraint each private person may lay upon himself, the public example will be under none at all. Every vice will have its patrons, be represented equally trifling, equally reputable, till we will be neither ashamed nor afraid to do any; and all restraint of sobriety of carriage, and even

the distinction of vice and virtue, shall be laughed out of the world. These are the natural consequences of making a mock at any sin.

And can it consist with reason and wisdom to advance such a scheme as this? To let loose all the wild passions of corrupt nature, to range and sport themselves through the earth? What deluge or pestilence can make so much havoc and distraction in the world, or be so pernicious to the peace and interests of human society? In Solomon's image of this folly, it is like a man who scatters arrows, fire-bands and death, and says, am I not in sport? And what does the fool gain to himself by the success of his attempt, but a share in the common calamities he occasions? Perhaps with fools like himself he may obtain the applause and reputation of an impudent wit; but from all serious and good men, from all who have any regard for the honour of God, for the salvation of men's souls, or for the virtue and welfare of their country, indignation and abhorrence; and from God, the righteous avenger of all contempt of his laws, the severest inflictions of his wrath, a place in the nethermost hell, with the great seducer and corrupter of mankind, whose kingdom and interests he has served. The time will come when he shall know and feel, that all the laws of God are the solemn injunctions of almighty power; that the penalties annexed to them are the immutable determinations of infinite justice. When sickness of age shall set the terrors of the Lord before him, with what regret and astonishment will he reflect on those sins which are now the subject of his mirth and drollery? With what agonies of remorse will he then remember how he has gloried in his shame, and beseech that majesty whom he has provoked, that the sorrow of the penitent may atone for the laughter of the fool?

From these reflections I hope it may appear to us, how much we are obliged in duty, and concerned in interest, to correct and oppose this vain, irreligious humour of mocking at sin. If we seriously attend to the considerations I have suggested, the nature and consequences of sin, the authority that forbids it, the penalties threatened to it, the misery

derives on mankind in this world, and the damnation that awaits it in another, it is impossible we should think lightly of it, either in ourselves or others. We may, with as much reason and sobriety, make a jest of a pestilence, and laugh at our own or our country's ruin. If the sins we treat with this levity are committed by other men, we make ourselves partakers with them; but if they are our own, we inflame the resentment, and double the guilt of them. For he who is ashamed of his sin confesses still the justice and obligation of the law he transgresses; some seeds of grace are yet alive in him, which by due culture and application may be improved to his recovery; his example at least is less infective, and if he perishes in his iniquity, he falls alone, and does not involve others in his ruin; but he who laughs and sports at his sin, not only offends, but defies God; he declares against the authority, and disowns the obligation, of his laws. Such a conduct darts light and discovery: the sinner triumphs and glories in his crimes, and forms a party against religion, and therefore will be answerable not only for his own commissions, but for the thousands that fall besides him, and the ten thousands whom he encourages in the same impious presumptions.

In order to check this growing evil, and restrain an offence so provoking to God, and so pernicious in its effects, on the virtue and happiness of mankind, let us every one, with a serious and fixed attention, reflect on that holy and dreadful presence before whom we stand; that the eyes of our Judge are always over us, attend our going out and our coming in, behold, observe, and record every action of our lives. Let us remember, that for every idle word we must give an account to his justice; that even the most innocent parts of our mirth will escape well, if they are reckoned among our pardonable infirmities. But where things serious and sacred, where God and religion, where the transgression of his laws, and the penalties he has annexed to them, are the subjects of an impious mirth, be we assured these things are noted in his book with the deepest characters of guilt, and will be resented with fury poured out. What God hates, he requires us to hate

also; and to express our allegiance to his kingdom, and our affection to his service, by an open and public detestation of what offends him. If we can be guilty of ourselves of the levity I have been speaking of, or if we sit passively, and let others affront his majesty, and laugh at his displeasure, must he not look upon us as traitors to his interests, and in confederacy with his enemies? Let us then appear with zeal on the cause of God, and declining virtue, and not suffer our religion, which no arguments can shake, to be jested out of the world by the raillery of fools. Let neither the wit nor figure of the criminal prevail with us by applause to encourage, or by silence to approve his profane liberties; but let us treat every sin with the resentment it deserves, and every offender with reproof and correction. If those among us who truly fear God, and are concerned for his honour, would unite in such a conduct, the effect of it would soon appear. Virtue would resume courage and confidence, and vice be driven to covert and retirement. Credit and applause would attend religion, and shame would be the promotion of fools. But whether the attempt succeeds in these effects or not, let us remember that God requires it at our hands; will acknowledge and reward our honest zeal, and make us large amends for any inconvenience we can suffer from it. But if either through shame or cowardice we decline this duty, of us shall the Son of Man be ashamed, before his Father and the holy angels.

SERMON LV.

By Dr. ROGERS.

Virtue and Piety our best Security.

1 PET. iii. 13, 14.

Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?
But, and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye.

THIS epistle the apostle of the circumcision addresses to the Jews, of the dispersion, after he and Paul had agreed upon their distinct provinces in the work

of the gospel. He begins with exhorting them to a general purity of life, and holiness in all manner of conversation, from a variety of Christian motives; from the expectation of that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved for them in heaven; from the holiness of that God who had called them, the regeneration they professed, and the dignity of that relation into which they were adopted, being as lively stones built up in a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. To these motives he proceeds to add this consideration, that by such a conduct they would engage the esteem of those who were without, the Gentiles, among whom they lived; that whereas they were ready to speak against them as evil-doers by beholding their good works, they might be induced to glorify God. He then descends to some duties of a more especial tendency to produce these good effects, such as obedience of subjects to their civil governors, and of servants to their masters, and that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. He then presses, as recommended by the same arguments, the relative duties between husband and wife; and finally, a general unanimity among the brethren, an affectionate love and tenderness towards each other, and pity and courteousness towards all men. And to the motives before suggested he farther adds, that a compliance with the commands of the gospel in these instances of duty, was the most effectual way to secure their outward quiet and happiness: for thus the Psalmist had assured them: *He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good: let him seek peace and ensue it: For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.* And besides the assurance which the promise of God gave them, that these effects should attend such a behaviour as he recommended, they might conclude it from the natural tendency of the duties themselves; for who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But, and if it should happen otherwise; if notwithstanding all their

care and innocence, the malice and wickedness of men should return evil for good, and persecute them for doing their duty, they might then take to themselves this great satisfaction, that they suffered for righteousness sake, and were entitled, by the promises of the gospel to a distinguished measure of reward: The conclusions which manifestly arise to us from this scripture are,

I. That a steady practice of the duties prescribed by the gospel, is the wisest and most effectual provision against those afflictions which are derived on us from the malice and passions of men: Nevertheless,

II. That this provision will not always be effectual to secure us from these afflictions; that the innocent, notwithstanding this defence, will sometimes suffer, yea suffer for being innocent. But then,

III. He who has made this provision, will find support, and even happiness, under the worst that can befall him, from this reflection, that he suffers for righteousness sake.

And, I. We are here taught, That a steady practice of the duties prescribed by the gospel, is our wisest and most effectual provision against all those afflictions which are derived on us from the malice and passions of other men. And how large a portion of that scene of misery which occurs to us in human life, is to be assigned to this class, we need no other proof than our own daily observation and experience. Let us examine the several tribes of mourners whom we meet in the world; let us attend to the cries of the oppressed, to the destitute exile, or the solitary captive in the dungeon; in sum, let us inquire into the source of all those various instances of public or private calamities which afflict mankind; and we shall soon be convinced, that the far greater number of them are owing to the tyranny, or malice, the envy, treachery, or revenge of unrighteous men. Now, from these evils, no skill or cunning of the world can give us a security, equal to that prescribed to us by our holy religion: for, in the first place, if we serve and please God in the duties of our stations, he himself (as the apostle here observes from the psalmist) has promised to be our protector. That Almighty Power,

in whose hands are all events of life, who directs the wills, and over-rules the passions of men; has assured us, that his eyes are over the righteous, that no evil shall come nigh his dwelling, neither shall the wicked approach to hurt him, and that he will make even his enemies to be at peace with him. But the apostle, in my text, particularly directs us to observe, that the duties enjoined by the gospel, are in their nature a guard and security to us from these evils.

So long as the distinctions of good and evil are acknowledged in the world, the actions commanded by our holy religion must be approved under the former character. Now this distinction was not made; and these opposite characters affixed to the actions of men, from a mere speculative and abstract consideration of their natures, but with a manifest relation to their effects, and the influence they had on the happiness of mankind. Those actions were by general consent denominated good, which conduce to private and social felicity; and those evil, which disturbed the peace of the world, or were injurious to the public or private interests of men. But among all the schemes of morality which have been recommended to the world, none ever appeared so exactly calculated for the happiness of men as that revealed and enjoined in the gospel. Natural reason approves the justness and excellency of every precept in it, and wherever it had before differed from these directions, is forced to acknowledge its own error. We may therefore conclude, that a conduct agreeable to these excellent rules of life, must lay a general obligation on the gratitude of mankind, and procure esteem and benevolence to the man whom it adorns. The most savage and wicked disposition cannot but discern something lovely and endearing in the meek and merciful, the affable and courteous, in the man who goes about doing good, and who extends his charity even to his enemies. The villain himself feels a secret impression of awe when he approaches so venerable a character: he cannot injure him without some remorse, and his hand strikes with reluctance.

That the protection of this character will especially appear to us, if we consi-

der, that the most barbarous temper oftener exerts itself under the appearance of revenge, than of voluntary and unprovoked mischief, and will always endeavour to plead in its defence the resentment of some real or seeming injury. Now, if our conduct be governed by the inoffensive rules of the gospel, we have the security of provoking none. The meek, the humble, the patient disciple of Christ, not only defrauds, injures, or oppresses no man, but has every passion under government and discipline, and consequently raises no enemy to himself by contempt, none by censure, none by envy. His pursuits of this life are calm and inoffensive. He does not willingly cross the projects, or break into the schemes, of the worldly and ambitious; and if he happens to be engaged in a competition (as sometimes he unavoidably may be) he confines himself to the bounds of justice and sobriety; his disputes are managed without fierceness and bitterness, without slander and detraction: and though he cannot permit himself to acknowledge right to be wrong, justice to be injustice, yet rather than be the occasion of any extensive evil, or of hindering any general good, he is prepared to give up his own interests, and recede even from the most equitable pretensions. He will avoid, in the whole course of his actions, not only what is really evil, but also, so far as it is possible, all appearance of it. This is the temper, and this will be the conduct, of all who sincerely obey the gospel, and are truly influenced by the spirit of it: a conduct which, so far as any rules of life can effect it, must disarm malice itself, must reconcile the friendship and affections of men to us, and not only give the wicked no provocation to harm us, but in a great measure disable him from doing it. A general esteem is itself a real protection. The injuries offered to a good man will be resented with an universal detestation, and every man's hand will be armed against him who inflicts them.

The protection of this character will appear still farther, if we recollect that the most considerable injuries we can receive, must be inflicted under some colour of justice, with the pretence of executing public laws, or at least within

the covert of them. For though we should suppose all esteem for virtue, all regards of conscience, to be put off by men, yet malice itself will be under some restraint from the civil laws of every community, and not care to expose itself to the penalties of them. Now the ends of society require, that the laws of every community should in general intend the defence and encouragement of those who do well, and the terror and punishment of evil doers. Laws, as the apostle observes, are not made for the righteous and good, but for the lawless and unruly, for the unjust and the oppressor, for the murderers of fathers, and the murderers of mothers, for the liar and the perjured, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. But against the just and the merciful, the temperate and the peaceable; against such there is no law. And consequently, they who are followers of that which is good, have not only the general protection of innocence, but act under the professed favour and defence of all laws; neither can they be brought under censure from them, unless their conduct be represented under some character of evil: an attempt of some difficulty, even to the subtlest malice, and which will not very often succeed, where the action is perfectly conformable to the rules of the gospel. Something or other will generally be found wanting, such prudence and circumspection at least, such guard against appearances as our religion advises, where an innocent person or action is in the ordinary course of justice rendered obnoxious to the law.

Let us suppose the case which was chiefly in the apostle's view, that the civil government should disavour us as it did the first Christians; these must be acknowledged to be circumstances in which our religion can give us the least protection; yet, if we be followers of that which is good, if we act up to the holy rules we profess, if we obey our superiors as far as our religion directs, if we mind our own business, confine ourselves to the duties of our station, and be pure and peaceable as we are commanded to be, such a conduct must be attended with the utmost security, that such circumstances can possibly admit: we shall,

in a great measure, out off all occasion, even from those who seek occasion, that they may have whereof to accuse us. And the most tyrannical government must not only be without any just offences from such a behaviour, but it must break through all those rules on which the happiness of society depends, and even act against its own true interests, before it can harm us. From what has been suggested on this head, I presume it may appear, that a conduct of life agreeable to the precepts of our religion, not only recommends us to the special protection of God, but naturally engages the friendship and inclination of mankind to us, puts us under the defence of a general esteem, offers no provocation to malice itself, and very much restrains even its power to hurt us, and consequently is our best security against the effects of it.

But a perfect exemption from injuries, the present condition of human life will not permit us to hope for; and therefore the apostle must not be here understood as affirming universally, and without exception, that if we are followers of that which is good, it will be impossible for any one to harm us. It was sufficient to his purpose of recommending innocence and virtue as our wisest choice, if the rule generally holds; if innocence is better guarded, and less exposed, and affords upon the whole a greater security, than the most refined expedients of secular cunning can give us without it. Unless the assertion were thus limited, it could not be reconciled to those many predictions of Christ and his apostles, by which they prepared their converts for distress and persecution from a prejudiced world, and would be refuted in the example of their own most holy life and bitter sufferings. In prevention of all mistake therefore, it is

II. Here supposed by the apostle, that the provision he recommends will not always prove effectual, but that the righteous may sometimes suffer, yea suffer for righteousness sake. And this we shall easily account for, if we consider,

1st, That there always were, and ever will be, some men so exceedingly wicked, so abandoned to their lusts and passions, as to break through all the bonds of gratitude, and even nature itself, in grati-

cation of them; such as murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers; and from these the most venerable innocence cannot always be a protection,

2dly, That our good actions will not always appear in their proper character, notwithstanding our greatest care. A very good man may want some degrees of prudence, and a very good action some circumstances which may be necessary to place them in a due light; and therefore it may not appear strange to us if they are sometimes mistaken, and opposed even by men, who are in general lovers of those who are good, and friends to virtue. All moral virtue, we know, consists in a medium, and is on either side parted as it were but by a line, from its opposite vices: and when the action approaches on either side to the line of partition, it is easy even for a good man to mistake it, and much easier for malice to represent it as an excess, and expose it to the reproach and penalties of a transgression. We must reflect,

3dly, That no human virtues are perfect, without a mixture of some real failings and imperfections. Surprise, weakness, or passion, will sometimes betray the best of us into actions not defensible; and these we must always expect to be aggravated by the enemies of virtue, and represented to our greatest disadvantage. They are fond of lessening the disparity of their own character, and bringing the virtuous down to a level with themselves; and therefore they never fail of objecting such defects in a good man as a proof of his hypocrisy, that his vices are really as great as their own, and only the more dangerous, for being covered under a pretence of virtue. When we attend to these reflections, we cannot be surprised if good men and good actions are sometimes mistaken, often misrepresented, and suffer what is only due to evil actions and evil-doers.

And this we may apply particularly to what, as I observed, was chiefly in the apostle's view in the scripture before us: the resentments of the public magistrate, whose power extending farther than all other men's, the inflictions of it must be the greatest of temporal evils, and the mistaken applications of it the greatest of temporal injuries.

Now when we consider that our actions cannot come to the notice of persons in that high station, but as they are brought to them by report of others, and that generally through several successive conveyances; and that if any one of these be partial or unjust, our behaviour cannot appear to them in its proper character: if we observe at the same time by how many strong passions of interest, ambition, or revenge, they who court the favour of a prince are tempted to discredit others, to represent them as evil-doers, unfit for his trust, disaffected to his person and government, and enemies to the civil peace; how easy it is for malice to find or make colours for such suggestions, how irresistibly are they infused by continual applications, and how difficultly removed by those who are accused? When, I say, we take these and many other circumstances, which will easily occur to us, into our thoughts, we cannot wonder if even good princes are sometimes imposed on, and provoked to treat as evil-doers persons of the greatest merit and innocence. It was by these evil arts and insinuations that not only a Nero and a Domitian, but even a Trajan and Antoninus, merciful and virtuous princes, were prevailed on to persecute a religion, the most harmless and inoffensive, and the most friendly to government that ever appeared in the world.

Nay, sometimes it must be expected to happen, that virtue itself may be the direct and immediate occasion of our suffering. We have before observed, that wicked men have even by principle and constitution a secret antipathy to good men, by which they are prepared to do every thing that may lessen their esteem, and render them vile and infamous in the eyes of the world: and as punishment is in common opinion a presumption of guilt, in the same proportion that wicked men are possessed of power, good men must expect to suffer. Their virtue itself renders them offensive to men hardened in a contrary disposition; their lives are a continual reproach to vice, and their actions must often in a course of duty cross upon the schemes and obstruct the designs of unrighteous power. It is a common remark of the Roman

historians, that under some of their bad emperors, it was a dangerous thing to be virtuous, and that men were forced to dissemble their inclinations and distinguish themselves by some fashionable vices, to avoid the jealousy and resentments of those in power: but this our holy religion will never permit us to do. If we thus please men, we cannot also be the servants of Christ. We are not at liberty to decline the obedience we owe to any one command of God, in compliment to the passions of men. And if the duties of our station require us to stand in the gap, and oppose ourselves to the overflowing of ungodliness, to succour the injured, and appear in defence of the oppressed, we are bound to act up to the occasion, though in every such case it is evident that our religion and virtue will be so far from a protection to us, that it must provoke the utmost resentment from the powers of the world, and derive the whole storm of their wrath upon our heads.

Blessed be God the fundamental laws of our constitution, and the justice of our government, secure us, as far as we are capable of being secured in this world, from all apprehensions of this kind, and encourage us to hope that innocence and virtue, a firm adherence to the faith and duties of our religion, cannot suffer among us under public resentment, but through such mistakes or misrepresentations as no human polity can provide against. But the case before supposed is manifestly possible. The sword of the magistrate has been even intentionally drawn against virtue and religion, and therefore may be again: and should we set this case wholly aside; yet when we consider how often public justice, and the most upright administration, will be imposed on by invidious suggestions, how impossible it is to guard against false accusations supported by perjury, and that so long as malice or ambition, envy or revenge, are found among mankind, instances will not be wanting of these unrighteous practices; we may be sure to find at all times ground enough for the supposition in my text, that the innocent may sometimes suffer, nay suffer even for righteousness sake.

Upon the whole then it appears,

That the preceding assertion of the apostle is to be taken, with its proper restriction, as generally not universally true. Generally, and in the ordinary course of things, they, who are followers of that which is good, will be protected from harm, and therefore, notwithstanding these exceptions, virtue and innocence are our wisest choice, and render us far more secure both from private and public injuries, than they can be who trust in the unrighteous arts of worldly cunning, and strengthen themselves in their ungodliness. And this was surely enough to recommend such a conduct to our choice and preference: more certainly than is here implied; the maxims of human life, and the wisest directions for present happiness, will not admit of. But the apostle carries the argument still farther; and supposing the worst that can befall us in exception to his general rule, yet still he persuades us to be followers of that which is good: for if we have made this provision, if we have with us a conscience void of offence, we shall find support and even matter of joy, from this reflection, that we suffer for righteousness sake, and be induced to think the affliction itself an honour and happiness to us. Which is the third general conclusion from my text, which I proposed to insist on: a doctrine of great importance, and which deserves to be farther enlarged on, than the present opportunity will permit.

SERMON LVI.

By Dr. ROGERS.

Virtue and Piety our best Security.

1 PET. III. 13, 14.

Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?
But, and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye.

THE import of this scripture I proposed to consider in these three conclusions, which seemed fully to comprehend the intention of the holy writer.

I. That a steady practice of the duties prescribed by the gospel, is the wisest and

most effectual provision against those evils which we are exposed to from the malice and passions of men. Nevertheless,

II. That this provision will not always be effectual to secure us from those evils that the innocent, notwithstanding this defence, may sometimes suffer, yea suffer for being innocent. But then,

III. He who has made this provision will find support, and even happiness, under the worst that can befall him, from this reflection, that he suffers for righteousness sake.

In treating the former of these heads, I endeavoured to shew, that the good and virtuous have a special interest in the protection of God: that the conduct of life, implied in this character, is itself a security to us, that the duties enjoined by our religion are, in their nature, such as not only offer no provocation to malice itself, but very much restrain its power to harm us: such as recommend us to general favour and esteem, and oblige the gratitude of mankind to shew kindness and benevolence towards us; such as put us under the professed protection of all laws, and which it is the interest of the magistrate to defend and encourage. But then,

II. I observed, that this general conclusion admits several exceptions. That we must sometimes expect our good to be evil spoken of, misunderstood even by good men, and invidiously represented by wicked men; and under these appearances of evil, be attended with public or private resentments, and derive on us such treatment as is due only to evil-doers. Nay, that sometimes our virtue itself may be the occasion of our sufferings, and a firm perseverance in duty, the immediate provocation of wicked men to harm us.

And therefore, to obviate these objections, and render the persuasion of the apostle, to follow that which is good, complete and effectual, it is necessary for us to attend to what he suggests in the

III^d place, That if we have made the provision he recommends, if we have been followers of that which is good, though our innocence may sometimes fail of protecting us from sufferings, it will give us a full equivalent in supporting us under them; nay, we may find reasons not only to bear the affliction with patience, but

even to esteem ourselves happy, whenever we suffer for righteousness sake.

The application of this noble motive of our religion, is what I reserved for your present meditation.

And because the foundation of this support under sufferings, is the innocence of the sufferer, and men are apt to take to themselves the comfort of suffering for righteousness sake when they have no title to this plea; and either through partiality or hypocrisy pretend conscience and obedience to God when they really suffer as evil-doers, it will be proper for us,

1st, To inquire when we may be satisfied that we suffer for righteousness sake.

I shall then shew,

2dly, The support and comfort which will arise to us from this reflection, whenever we can truly apply it to our sufferings.

As to injuries of a private nature, which flow from the malice of particular men, if we have given just provocations of resentment, or such as, in a common estimate of the passions of mankind, may be expected to irritate their revenge, though the avenger may sin in his resentment, yet the evils produced by it must be received by us as the effects of our own misconduct, and cannot be charged to the account of righteousness, unless the action be such as we are bound in strict duty to God or our neighbour to perform.

But injuries of this kind, and the occasions of them, being less capable of rule, and less considerable in their effects, than those which are derived from public power; and these latter being principally, if not only in the apostle's view, in this scripture I shall chiefly attend to these.

The only cases in which we can suffer for righteousness sake, under the inflictions of public power, are either when just laws are unrighteously applied in the execution, or when the law itself is unjust, and requires us to do what a superior law forbids.

As to the first case, corrupt and wicked as the world is, virtue and justice continue still to be venerable names, to which the most dissolute will not openly renounce their title; and accordingly, the most

unrighteous power was never professedly exerted in the oppression of virtue and innocence as such, but under the colour and suggestion of some crime, acknowledged in general to deserve the infliction. Now, if a man be really guilty of the crime, objected, however virtuous or praise-worthy he may be in other parts of his character, he cannot pretend that his punishment is unjust, or that he suffers for righteousness sake. Nay, if he has not taken due care to guard against the appearances of evil, if his conduct has the outward marks or symptoms of guilt, the ministers of public justice cannot be charged with iniquity for resenting it, in a manner agreeable to the laws of that community in which they preside. Human justice can look no farther than the overt action, and the apparent characters of it; and therefore, whatever any one suffers under such legal presumptions of evil, he must take as a consequence, if not of his guilt, yet of his great indiscretion.

In the second case, when the matter of the law is such as falls properly under the direction of a human legislature, *i. e.* either such actions as are of prior obligation, by the dictates of a superior law; or such as are left indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden by any law of God, positive or natural; whatever we suffer for disobedience to such laws, cannot be on account of conscience towards God, or for righteousness sake; for where the action enjoined is a duty of prior obligation by the law of God, man only requires under civil penalties, what God requires under natural or spiritual, and consequently we cannot disobey the one, but we must at the same time disobey the other. And where the matter of the human law is such actions as are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, it is evident, that by obeying such law of man, we cannot disobey any law of God (for the law of God, in this case, is supposed perfectly silent); for *where there is no law there is no transgression*. Objections against the law as inexpedient, or not conducive to the end it proposes, can be no reason in conscience for declining obedience to it: because the nature of society requires, that in prudential considerations, public authority should judge

for the whole, and conclude the sentiments of every private member. The subject therefore cannot act contrary to any duty, in submitting to such resolutions; and consequently, whatever he suffers in refusal of such submission, he suffers not for righteousness sake, but as an evil-doer, an opposer of authority, acting within the just limits of its power.

If a man mistakes the nature of the action enjoined, and under a mispersuasion of conscience refuses obedience to the law of his superiors, as contrary to the law of God, as commanding something which he forbids, or forbidding something which he commands; in this case it is plain,

1st, that the internal circumstance of the error which may possibly excuse it before God, are undiscernable by men. They cannot certainly distinguish between a real and pretended persuasion of conscience; and if this plea were to be always admitted in exemption from punishment, no laws would be of any force or use. Where indeed it can be equitably presumed, that the error is purely involuntary, and the man notwithstanding it, innocent before God, and the action or example have no manifest evil tendency, there may be reasons for human justice to abate of the severity of the law, and deal tenderly with the offender. But this must be left wholly to the judgment of those in authority: and if, in the result of their consideration, they determine to inflict the penalties of the law, their sentence must be acquiesced in, and esteemed even by the offender himself to be legally just. And,

2dly, With regard to the judgment of God upon the action, (on a presumption of which alone, either the satisfaction of the actor's conscience, or the indulgence of authority to him can rationally be founded,) before his approbation of the man, or his excuse of the action can be presumed, the error must appear such as may consist with an honest, upright, and humble heart, free from pride or obstinacy, and not biassed by any corrupt motive; such as a good man, and a good subject, with due attention, might fall into. But alas! if we look over the pretended martyrologies of late ages, how many instances occur to us, to which

charity itself cannot extend these characters! How numerous are the examples canonised for saints and confessors, who have suffered for such crimes, as the first dictates of natural reason, the plain rules of the gospel, and the fundamental principles of human society, condemn! such actions, as the ignorance of their nature must itself be a sin not to be excused. Nay, some of them have gone so far as to acknowledge the actions they have committed to be simply, and in themselves evil, but have pretended the pious ends they sought by them sanctified the villainy, and changed its nature. Our own history furnishes us with instances of more than one kind of enemies who have defended perjury, parricide, assassinations, and rebellion, to be lawful, in order to introduce their own schemes of religion and government, and subvert that established, while the profession has been a zeal to assert the cause, and promote the glory of God; and to those who have suffered in these wicked attempts, has been ascribed the honour of martyrdom. But I trust we have not so learned Christ, and will never be persuaded, that the least evil can be justified by a pretence of promoting the greatest good by it. The religion of the holy Jesus abhors to be assisted by such principles as these; nor will he ever acknowledge those as confessors for him, who suffer under the demerit of such crimes.

But farther; though the principle and end by which we are influenced be good, and the actions by which we endeavour to promote it, be to some persons, and in some circumstances, not only lawful, but a duty; yet if to us, in our stations and circumstances, they are improper and unlawful, whatever we suffer in consequence of such actions, cannot be placed to the account of righteousness.

Thus, for instance, the infliction of corporal punishment, and, in some cases, even of death itself, may be the duty of a magistrate. But if a private person takes upon him to do this, his punishment will be just, neither can he pretend that he suffers for righteousness sake. And so again, it may be the duty of persons in some stations, and who are

intrusted with the defence of public liberties, to oppose with zeal the errors or oppressions of public administrations; but in a private station, the same actions would be mutiny and sedition: he acts out of his post and calling, and whatever inconveniences he derives on himself by such a conduct, are but the just consequences of it: he suffers as an evil-doer, as assuming such liberties as are inconsistent with any order or good government among mankind. It is our duty to oppose all unrighteousness, within the compass of our station; but it is not our duty to go out of our station on any pretence, and intrude into an office which does not belong to us.

I may add farther, that whatever may be the occasion of our sufferings, yet unless we suffer like Christians, with that meekness which our religion prescribes; if we betray a spirit of impatience and revenge under our sufferings, we may not assume the character, or promise ourselves the reward, of those who suffer for righteousness sake.

The limits under which the apostle asserts this conclusion of my text in the preceding chapter, will, if duly attended to, direct us in the application of it. *This (says he) is thank-worthy, if a man, for conscience towards God, endures grief suffering wrongfully: for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God.* From which scripture it is evident, 1st, That unless we suffer really for conscience sake; 2dly, Though we suffer for conscience sake, yet unless we suffer wrongfully, unless the actions, which under that persuasion we are led to, are in their nature such as no punishment is due to; and, 3dly, Unless we take patiently, even what we thus wrongfully suffer, neither the character described by the apostle, nor the encouragement here given to it, will belong to us.

These exceptions being admitted, it will be easy to collect when we may be truly said to suffer for righteousness sake. And here it may be proper to premise that an absolute sinless innocence, in all parts of

our life, is not necessary to assure our title to the encouragement of my text ; because if this were the condition of it, it could never be applied to any man living, or to any case that can arise : it must therefore be sufficient to our consolation, if we can apply the character to the particular occasion of our sufferings.

1st, Then, we may take to ourselves this comfort, when the action for which we suffer is such as we are manifestly obliged to, whether it be the general duty of all men, or of all Christians, or the particular duty of our office and station in church or state. For every part of our duty, civil as well as what may strictly be called religious, is enjoined under the sanctions and encouragements of the gospel ; and therefore, he who suffers for an act of civil justice proper to his station, will be intitled to the happiness here promised, as well as he who suffers for professing the Christian faith. And though the Christian religion as such neither prescribes, nor admits any other defence against the oppositions of civil power, than prayers and tears, reason and persuasion, and the influences of a holy inoffensive behaviour ; yet when the laws of that religion are incorporated into, and made a part of the laws of the land, the subject has the same right of being protected by those laws, as by any other laws of that community. The profession of that religion becomes a branch, and surely a most valuable branch, of his legal property. And though his religion will not justify him in doing any thing in defence of this or any other claim, beyond the legal powers of his station ; yet whatever within that compass it is lawful, or his duty to do, in assertion of any other legal right, from public or private attempts against it, it will be equally lawful, or his duty to do, in assertion of this right : and consequently, whatever he may suffer from the resentments of those whom he may be obliged to oppose, will be as truly suffering for righteousness sake in one case as in the other.

2dly, When we suffer under a mistaken persuasion of duty, if the nature of the action be such as a good man might

easily apprehend it, and we have dispassionately and attentively considered it, and the motives that lead us to it ; though this plea cannot without the greatest inconveniences be admitted as a sufficient excuse before a human tribunal, because it cannot be discerned by man when this plea is real or pretended ; yet God, who sees the integrity of the heart, and the innocence of the will, will doubtless admit it : and, though he disapproves the particular action for which he suffers, will accept the man as suffering for conscience sake, and for his obedience to that great law of acting according to the best light he had, or in those circumstances could have.

In sum ; however difficult it may sometimes be, to judge for other men in these cases, it cannot be often difficult for an honest man to determine for himself. Others we may perhaps impose on with pretences of conscience, and protestations of innocence, but our own hearts are not easily deceived : we cannot but know whether we are really guilty of the facts charged upon us, or not. And as to the nature of the action, the rules and measures of our duty (in the most considerable parts of it) are plain and legible to the meanest capacities ; and in cases really doubtful, it is neither hard to resolve where we should apply ourselves for information, nor how far we should be governed by it : and as to the motives of our conduct, they must be in every one's view, who observes what passes in our own mind. If then we sincerely examine our actions by these rules, which it is manifestly in every one's power to do, we cannot often mistake a sin for a duty, and consequently cannot often be at a loss to know, whether what we at any time suffer from the public or private resentments of men, be for righteousness sake, or not. Whatever by a due and attentive application of the proper rules of action appears to be a duty of the station we are placed in, we are bound to perform, whatever penalties from our superiors, or whatever inconveniences from the passions of our equals, or inferiors, it may expose us to. And whatever we suffer from either for so doing, if we endure it with that meekness and resignation our religion pre-

scribes, we have the encouragement of the apostle to think it an honour and happiness to us; which is the

2d Point I undertook to prove. This was indeed a doctrine difficultly received at the first proposition of it by our Lord, a hard saying, which the aversions of our voluptuous nature to present pain could not easily be reconciled to; but yet we find the same taught as a conclusion of natural reason. There is nothing more frequently asserted, among the maxims even of heathen morality, than the glory of suffering for virtue. These are the circumstances in which they delight to represent their hero, as the greatest advantage to his character, and in which he shined with the most distinguished lustre. It is true indeed, that if the many fine things they have said on this topic are called to a strict examination, the principles whence they argued appear hardly strong enough to bear the weight laid upon them. The building was beautiful in the structure, but weak in the foundation. The rewarding virtue with itself, and the paradox they advanced upon that scheme, that a virtuous man could not be miserable even in torments, were too visionary and romantic doctrines, to expect much influence on the practice of mankind. The conclusion was useful, and conducive to the happiness of men, if they could be prevailed on to receive an encouragement to great and good actions, and a support under all the distresses that could attend them; but still there was a defect in the principles it was built on, and till this was removed, all the oratory of the preacher amounted only to this, that it was an opinion of good tendency, and that it was worth the while of mankind to be deceived into it. Some few indeed among them ventured farther, and encouraged men to hope a future recompense from the justice of God for all they suffered in the cause of virtue. They were here upon right ground, if they could have maintained it; but their arguments upon this prospect were but conjectural. Natural reason was here at the end of its line; it stood upon the shore, and looked with solicitude into the ocean of eternity. The eye reached but a little way, and was then lost in clouds and darkness; some-

thing it was probable might be beyond its present view, but what it was, or whether any thing at all, reason could not with assurance determine. And as it usually happens to persons who look with long attention on a prospect, where nothing is distinctly perceived, that some will fancy they see, and others for the credit of being discoverers will pretend to see various appearances; so it was in this case; the fictions of poets, and the conjectures or vanity of philosophers, undertook to form various scenes of this *terra incognita*, which were received according to the esteem of the reporters, or the credulity of the hearers; the one served to amuse the superstition of the vulgar, and the other the disputations of the curious, but in the result afforded no rational satisfaction: the certainty of the conclusion depended on the will of God, and could not otherwise be known but by revelation. The presumption indeed of a future state was very great, and general among mankind; but it prevailed not as a firm conclusion of reason, from which few attempted, and none were able to deduce it with clear evidence, but either as a remain of original tradition, or as a persuasion agreeable to the interest and wishes of men. But what I would observe hence to my present purpose is, that if these dark views, and confused sentiments of a future state, were able to infuse into mankind such a consciousness of the dignity of their nature, and the dishonour of a base action, as appeared among some of the heathens; if they could give firmness and courage to the innocent, and patience, and even cheerfulness, to suffering virtue; in how much greater proportion must these effects be derived from the prospects of the gospel? The veil is now drawn, the clouds and darkness which intercepted our view dispelled, and the eye strengthened by faith is enabled to look into the awful scene, is assured of the reality of the vision, by a divine revelation indisputably attested, and beholds in it such rewards and penalties attending human actions, as render all their present consequences trifling and inconsiderable.

The Christian has always before him that sentence of his Lord,—*This do and thou shalt live*: the rule of his duty, and

his encouragement to perform it. And though he is in general assured, that godliness has the promises of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come; and is ordinarily and in its nature our best security from present evils, yet he is prepared to expect many exceptions to this rule. He remembers that it is a condition of his profession, to take up his cross and follow his Master; *That whosoever will live godly in this world, must suffer persecution*: that iniquity will sometimes abound, and that his religion itself, and the duties it prescribes, will sometimes expose him to the malice and resentments of unrighteous men. But whenever this happens, he is prepared for the shock: he has a firm support in the promises of God, and the distinguished portion of glory which awaits his sufferings. He recollects with unspeakable pleasure those words of his Redeemer—*Blessed are you when men hate you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil of you, for my sake and the gospel: rejoice and be exceeding glad in that day, for great is your reward in heaven*. He looks up to those great examples of his religion, who have gone before him in the same paths of sorrow: to the captain of his salvation, the author and finisher of his faith, who was made perfect through sufferings, far greater and more undeserved than his: to apostles, prophets, and that noble army of martyrs, who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments, of racks and crosses, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Supported by these animating views of his faith, and encouraged by so many glorious examples of the power of it, he can triumph in the midst of torments, and rejoice that he is called to the honour of suffering for righteousness sake.

Upon the whole then it appears to us, from the apostle's reasoning in this scripture, that the promises of God, and the nature and tendency of the duties enjoined by our religion, assure us, that a conduct of life agreeable to it, is our best security from those manifold evils we are exposed to in an unrighteous and passionate world: that it will generally assuage the malice, and restrain the

power, of those who would hurt us. And on the contrary it is manifest, that vice and irreligion are far more obnoxious to these evils, offer greater provocations to the resentments of men, and are less defended from the effects of them. But then it is also here supposed, that in the course of human affairs we must expect frequent exceptions to these rules; that it will sometimes happen to the righteous, according to the work of the wicked; that good and godly men may sometimes suffer, yea suffer for righteousness sake. But what, shall we conclude from hence, that there is no profit in being followers of that which is good, and making our way perfect? No, surely: there is still encouragement enough to persevere in duty, since the reflection on our own innocence, and the promises of the gospel, are able to support us under the worst we can suffer in consequence of it. The God whom we faithfully serve, we know to be our friend, a friend who will not leave us nor forsake us; who will either remove our burden, or increase our strength to bear it; or, which is a prospect of still more encouragement, will reward the light affliction that can endure but for a moment, with a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. A good man under these reflections is fortified against every event of life, his heart is established, and will not shrink, neither will he fear what man can do unto him.

But with the ungodly it is not so: as their vices render them more exposed to these evils; so whenever they befall them, they are without hope or comfort under them; the reproaches of God and man, and their own conscience, combine together to add weight and terror to the affliction, and leave them for their last recourse to blasphemy and despair. But though we should not be thus abandoned to sin, as this character seems to suppose; though we may be able to reflect with pleasure on some parts of our conduct, yet if in the particular instance of our affliction we suffer as evil-doers, we cannot but confess that we suffer deservedly, a conviction which at once takes from us all the consolation of this scripture, the applause of conscience, and the prospect of reward from God. And

though we may hope comfortably, that God upon our humiliation will pardon our sins, and through the merits of Christ accept our temporal sufferings in atonement for it, yet the joy that arises to us from this hope is mixed and alloyed with the tears of the penitent, and is not like that joy unspeakable, and full of glory, which shines forth in the triumphs of the martyr.

Let us then be convinced by this scripture, and what has occurred to us in reflecting on it, of what importance it is to our present as well as future happiness, to keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right. This will be our best guard in our passage through this vale of misery, will give us courage and cheerfulness through the several stages of our journey, and support us under the various evils that attend us in it. And though a steady adherence to duty may sometimes itself be an occasion of our suffering: yet in the multitude of these sorrows, the comforts that arise to us from the promises of God, will be able to refresh our souls, will conduct us with patience, and even pleasure, through our trials, and infallibly bring us peace at the last.

SERMON LVII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

The Death and Sufferings of Christ, foretold and described.

Preached on Good-Friday.

Isa. liii. 5.

—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

THE death and passion of our blessed Lord, as it is the great article on which the whole Christian scheme is built, so our reflections on it suggest to us the strongest motives to all those virtues and graces which qualify us to be partakers of the benefits of it. The disciples therefore of the gospel can never too often contemplate this endearing instance of their Master's love: but the piety of the

church has particularly recommended this subject to our meditation in the present solemnity; we should now more especially employ our thoughts on what the Son of God endured for the redemption of a sinful world. And I think there is no passage in holy scripture which represents this great event in more affecting terms than the mournful eloquence of the Prophet in the chapter before us. So clear and distinct were the views in which the Holy Spirit revealed this article to the faith of this his servant, that even the chosen witnesses of our Lord's passion, who saw with their eyes their bleeding Master hang upon the cross, are not more passionate in their descriptions of it: *He is despised* (said he, ver. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.) *and rejected of men: he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment. He was cut off out of the land of the living. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: though he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

The end and intention of these sufferings of the Messiah, the Prophet reminds us of in the words of my text, *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.*

This scripture may be considered either,

I. As a prophecy, the manifest completion of which, in the death and sufferings of the blessed Jesus, is one of the strongest arguments to convince our faith that he was that very Messiah which should come into the world. Or,

II. We may consider it as a declaration of the end intended, and the effect obtained by the passion of the Messiah, viz. the atonement of our sins, and the restoring us to a state of peace and friendship with God. I shall treat each of these briefly, and proceed,

III. To what I principally intend in this discourse, to suggest those meditations to our thoughts, and those affections to our souls, which so sublime a subject, and so amazing an instance of

divine compassion, requires from us. And,

I. The manifest completion of this prophecy, in the death and sufferings of our Lord, is a convincing argument to our faith that he is that very Messiah which should come into the world.

That the adoration of a crucified God should be diffculty received by the more inquisitive part of the gentile world, we are not so much to wonder, because it was a doctrine that seemed, at first view, contrary to the very idea of the divine nature, and refuted even in its principle by the impassibility of the Deity. And, what particularly discouraged the reception of it among the common people, it was generally treated with ridicule, and exposed them to an obvious and ungrateful topic of reproach from every infidel they met with. And having never been prepared by any previous revelation to expect a Redeemer in so mean and contemptible a character, it is hardly to be imagined that their prejudices should immediately be prevailed on to give the arguments that persuaded their belief a serious and attentive hearing. But the Jews were so expressly directed to look for a Messiah without form or comeliness, a man of sorrows, who should make his soul an offering for sin, and be numbered with the transgressors; and saw all these predictions so evidently fulfilled in the blessed Jesus, that the completion of no prophecy concerning the Messiah can seem more wonderful to us, than that of their rejecting him. His death was typified in every sacrifice they offered, in almost every rite and ceremony of their law, and described in so lively a manner, even in the most minute circumstances of it, by their prophets, that nothing could be wanting to their conviction, but attentively to compare the draught with the original.

I or view him only as he was described in the prophecy before us. Was it foretold that he should be a man of sorrows; and was ever sorrow like his sorrow? Was he to be despised and rejected of men? Thus came the blessed Jesus unto his own, and his own received him not, but preferred even a rebel and a murderer before him. Was he to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, patient and resigned as

a sheep before her shearers? Behold the Lamb of God, the meek and humble Jesus, who when he was reviled, replied not again. Though he could have commanded legions of angels to his rescue, yet dragged to Calvary without opposition or complaint; no voice was heard from him, either to appease the rage of his persecutors, or implore the pity of the beholders: *Weep not for me* (says he, to those who attended him with tears), *but weep for yourselves, ye daughters of Jerusalem*. Was he to make his grave with the wicked, to be numbered with the transgressors, and to make intercession for the transgressors? Behold him expiring in the torments of the cross in the midst of thieves, and praying for his murderers. Other prophets have been so particular as to prefix the very time in which the Messiah should be cut off. (Dan. ix. 26.) The prophet Zachary foretels the price he was to be sold for, and the employment of the money. The Psalmist describes the very manner and circumstances of his death: that they should pierce his hands and his feet. Zech. xi. 12. The very expressions of reproach that should be cast upon him: *He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him*. Psalm xxxvii. 8. 16. The parting his garments by lot by the soldiers; and the giving him vinegar to drink. Great part of these predictions have been understood by the Jews themselves to relate to the Messiah; and this relation has been affirmed by the testimony of God, proved by the best direct evidences that were ever produced for any divine revelation, as full and conclusive as it was possible for God himself to give: and the correspondence of the death and sufferings of our Lord to them is so punctual and exact, that they seem rather like a history of events past, than a prophecy of such as were to come: and if they were not fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, it is impossible we should ever know when any prophecy is fulfilled. And nothing but the curse of God denounced against that stubborn people, *that hearing they should hear and not understand, and seeing they should see, and not perceive*, can account for an infidelity that could resist the evidence

of so clear a proof. This single chapter of Isaiah now before us, furnished Philip with an argument for the conversion of the eunuch; and has been found effectual in the conviction of some modern examples of infidelity, where other arguments have been heard without impression. But,

II. We are also hence informed in the occasion and end of the Messiah's sufferings. *He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.*

That he suffered not for his own sins, the piety and innocence of his life may abundantly assure us. He went about doing good, healing the infirmities, and correcting the errors, of mankind: he gave eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and preached the gospel to the poor. It was the public confession of the multitude, that he had done all things well. The declaration of his judges, both Pilate and Herod, that after the strictest examination they found no fault in him. The testimony of the Centurion, an impartial unprejudiced witness, *certainly this was a righteous man.* Now we could not acquit the justice of God from partiality in suffering so innocent, so exemplary a person to be thus barbarously used and murdered, unless some excellent end were to be promoted by it. And this we are assured from scripture was the redeeming mankind from a state of sin and misery; and that this was accomplished by his taking upon himself the penalties due to our impieties, and bearing the burden of an offending world. For it consisted not with the majesty and immutability of the divine law-giver to remit the penalties of disobedience without some satisfaction paid to his justice. Such a conduct must have appeared rather like tameness than lenity, and have exposed his authority to all the insults of vice and impudence. Some satisfaction therefore was necessary: and what was there which offending man could offer unto his Creator? Could the blood of bullocks or rams take away his sin? With what imaginable reason could it be presumed that God should be appeased by the destruction of his creatures? Should he multiply his oblations before

him, and pour out upon his altar rivers of oil? Alas! in all this he could give him but his own, and discharge but a part of that debt, which the common mercies of Providence required from him. Should he sacrifice unto him his first-born, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul? This were in all the views of reason but adding one impiety to another, and the sacrifice itself must want an atonement. Should he then offer himself to the curse of the law, to undergo the wages of his sin? This were to bear, and not to divert, the punishment: and even in this submission, the utmost any one could suffer could satisfy for no more than his own offences. No, it must cost more to redeem a world of sinners, than man had to pay. But the divine compassion left us not in this despair of redress; himself contrived a method by which his justice should be satisfied, and yet the offender be saved. The eternal Son of his love took upon him the burden and penalties of our transgressions: he who knew no sin became sin for us, and by one oblation of himself once offered, paid a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. For he who offers unto the offended party what he has as great a value for as he has hatred for the offence, may properly be said to satisfy for and undergo the penalties due to that offence. This is implied in the very terms of ransom and redemption, which signify the payment of a price which the offended will receive as an equivalent, for the penalties incurred by the criminal: whether that consists in any thing of value deposited, or some performance which the offended will accept. And thus did our blessed Lord by the innocence of his life, the bitterness of his death, and the dignity of his person, offer unto God what he had as intense a love for, as he had provocation from the sins of the whole world. Thus did he pay down the utmost farthing for our redemption, and thereby rescue the captive into liberty, and restore the rebel into a state of grace and favour. Thus was he wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and by these stripes of the master was the servant healed. And therefore,

III. Let our devotion employ the present holy season in giving this sublime subject, this amazing instance of divine love, its due influence, in suggesting proper meditations to our thoughts and affections to our souls. And,

1. Let us with trembling and astonishment reflect how dreadful an evil sin must be, which nothing could expiate but the blood of the Son of God. If we consider sin in all the terrible consequences that had before attended it, as the parent and cause of all misery, as what derived a curse on nature, robbed man of his innocence and felicity: that it was sin which provoked the Almighty to descend in so many fearful examples of vengeance on the world; which broke up the fountains of the great deep, and kindled the flames of Sodom: that the extinction of nations, and the desolation of kingdoms; that all the instances of misery and affliction which attend mankind, were but the effects of this destructive evil: and if we add to all this, those terrors which the natural presumptions of conscience open to our prospect beyond the grave; what hatred and aversion should these reviews give us towards this great enemy of our nature, this destroyer of our happiness? With what passion then, with what new resentment of soul, must the Christian behold it, bringing down the Son of God from the bosom of his Father, spoiling him of his glory, and exposing him to the weakness and indignity of mortality, to the shame and anguish of the cross? All the former effects either known, or feared of sin, fatal as they were, yet affected only the sinner. The soul that sinned died, and the offender with the greatest justice suffered the consequence of his own folly. But here we see the Author and Fountain of all good wounded by sin, and bruised by iniquity; the innocent oppressed by the burden of the guilty; the beloved of God slain by the sins of men. With what humility and abhorrence of himself should offending dust reflect on so sad an effect of his impiety? With what loathing and detestation should he fly those crimes which nailed his friend and patron to the cross, and shed the precious blood of his Redeemer? Let us then,

2. Reflect what returns of gratitude we

owe to so amazing an instance of divine love towards us: let it inflame our affections to consider distinctly what our Lord and Master did and suffered for our sakes: let us attend him in all the melancholy stages of his passion, and behold him either deserted or betrayed by his servants, dragged by a rude multitude before a partial and enraged tribunal: the Creator and Governor of the world crowned with thorns, contemned, reviled, and spitted on, the scorn of the magistrate, the sport of insolent soldiers. Let us behold him fainting under the burden of his cross; the innocent Jesus numbered with the transgressors, led to a cursed death, with thieves and malefactors. Let it pierce our souls to reflect how his hands and feet were torn by the nails, and his side by the spear; the Prince of life expired in agonies, amidst the blasphemies and reproaches of his own creatures; and let us at the same time remember that he endured all this for our sakes, for rebellious, ungrateful man, his enemy, his betrayer, and murderer. Never was love like this love, nor compassion like that of our God. Greater love than this, says the Apostle (John, xv. 13.), hath no man, *that a man lay down his life for his friends*; but greater love even than this has God shewed to his creatures, in that while we were yet enemies, *Christ died for us*. To have restored the rebel to favour upon his submission, to have accepted his repentance, and hearkened to his intreaties of pardon, had itself been an act of mercy, which neither the prayers of men could hope for, nor their obedience return. What heart then can conceive, or what tongue express, the affection of Christ to his creatures; who, before the offender made any overture of submission, while he persisted in his rebellion, disclaimed and rejected the offers of grace, and even reviled and persecuted the messenger of it, not only interceded for the pardon of this unrelenting enemy, but even laid down his own life for the purchase of it? *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him?* Thou madest him lower than the angels, yet them for their disobedience thou hast reserved in chains of darkness, condemned, to a miserable

immortality; but unto man equally rebellious, equally apostate from thee and goodness, thou hast given a Saviour; even thine only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And shall any thing be too severe to be endured, too hard to be performed, or too dear to be parted with for his sake, who thus loved us, and gave himself for us? When the Redeemer of our souls requires us to resign the interests or pleasures of this life; to submit to injuries, reproach, or affliction in his service, can we withhold the one, or decline the other, when we remember that he descended from the right hand of the majesty of God, and endured the shame and tortures of the cross for our salvation? With what readiness should we comply with the requests of so great a benefactor? with what alacrity obey his commands? All that we enjoy or hope for, we owe to his favour, and our very souls are the purchase of his blood. And should the friend to whom we are so infinitely obliged, require some great thing of us, should we refuse to perform it? How much more when he only invites us to pursue our own greatest interest, when he commands us to be happy, when he intreats us to be saved? How monstrous then must be our ingratitude, if we continue in those sins which repeat the agonies of his passion, which make his wounds to bleed afresh, and put him anew to shame? But as the love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, should engage our utmost returns of gratitude and obedience, and prevail on us to devote our lives to his service and pleasure, and to fly with abhorrence from whatever will grieve and offend him; so it is farther proposed to our meditations as an example of patience, humility, and charity.

How should it animate us in all the trials of our faith, in all the miseries and afflictions of life, to reflect that our Lord and Master was made perfect through sufferings? Are we grieved with the scorn and derision of the profane? Thus was the blessed Jesus despised and rejected of men. Is tribulation, distress, and persecution, our portion? Thus was the Captain of our salvation a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And how should it mortify all our fondness

and contention for the pomps and honours of this world, to consider that the Son of God chose to appear in the meanest and most ignoble circumstances of humanity; lived an indigent dependent life, and submitted to the infamous death of a slave? And lastly, how should it calm our resentments, and extend our charity, even to the greatest enemies, to remember that our blessed Lord died for his sinful creatures? Even the agonies of his torments abated not his love, but he expired interceding for his murderers. Are the offences we resent and complain of, to be compared with the provocation of a world of sinners against their God? The fiercest contentions of men are between creatures equal in nature, and capable by the greatest distinction of circumstances and authority of but a very small remove one from another. But the enemies of God are the work of his creation, the dependants of his power, and whom he has endeavoured to oblige by wonders of his love. If therefore God could forgive injuries heightened by so many aggravating circumstances, sins against his power and authority, sins against his mercy and goodness, and sins of his creatures and necessary dependants, and forgive them in a manner so expressive of tenderness and concern, as to substitute his own Son to suffer in their stead, what provocations can we ever receive that ought not to command the same pardon and condescension from us? Ought not we to be merciful, since our Father which is in heaven is thus amazingly merciful? To conclude: The Son of God has washed us in his blood, has cleansed and purified the stains of our nature, and renewed our title to eternal happiness; and shall we again return to our pollution, shall we forfeit the mercies of this second covenant also, and give our own and our Creator's enemy the triumph of a second conquest over us? Let us look back and tremble at the danger we have escaped, and let us remember, that if we neglect the overtures of this grace, there remains no farther sacrifice for our sin, no fresh covenant of grace to be proposed to us, no new Redeemer to be offered for us; even infinite mercy is exhausted, and can do no more than has already been done for our salvation. Let

us therefore labour to secure an interest in the merits of this Mediator: let it not be in vain for us that this Jesus, this Saviour, is come into the world; but let his doctrine engage our faith, and his commands our obedience: and let us with a lively devotion join the sacred hymns of those ten thousand times ten thousand voices that surround the throne of God, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and wisdom, and honour, and glory, and blessing; and therefore blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* (Rev. v. 12, 13.)

SERMON LVIII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

The Certainty of our own Resurrection inferred from the Resurrection of Christ.

1 Cor. xv 23, *latter part.*

Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.

THE Apostle in the former part of these words asserts the resurrection of Christ; in the latter part of the words directs us to infer immediately from it the certainty and connection of our own: that as the waved sheaf in the Levitical law sanctified the whole harvest, so Christ, who was sowed in dishonour, even as we are, being raised in glory, should derive the same privilege on all those who are his, at his coming.

The prospect beyond the grave, and what became of this thoughtful busy creature, when he was removed from the scene of this world, has been a speculation that has amused the vulgar, and puzzled the philosophy of the wise, in all ages of the world.

Human nature could not sustain the reflection of having the prospect closed with this life, and all its schemes and expectations to determine with this frail and perishable composition of flesh and blood; and therefore the vulgar supported themselves with fables, and the philosophers with some rational probability of a

future state. But their most successful researches upon this subject could never rise higher than to a fair possibility; and the conclusions they came to were such as they rather wished might be true, than such as they could give a firm and confident assent to; and left the atheist room for disputation, and even the best men but a diffident expectation of their immortality.

But for the resurrection of the body, this was such a contradiction to their philosophy, that the Apostle of my text had no sooner proposed it to the great masters of knowledge at Athens, but he himself was ridiculed as a babbler, and his doctrine exploded as an incredible fable. And indeed no article of Christianity met with a more difficult reception in the world, than this of the resurrection of the body.

For that this dissolved and disunited frame should ever be restored to its first strength and beauty, that ever these scattered materials, dispersed through all the elements, should be re-collected into the same form and comeliness; that the urn should restore its ashes, and the sea give up her dead, was an assertion so amazing, and encumbered with so many difficulties and objections, that bare unassisted reason could never get over them. Even the Jews themselves, who had the privilege of a nearer access to God, had yet but very dark notices of this great truth; and the Scripture tells us, that there was a considerable sect even of those who pretended to learning among them (namely, the Sadducees), who believed neither resurrection, angel, nor spirit. No, it was Christianity first clearly proved this noble and important truth to the world, and this life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel. Christ our Saviour has asserted the strength of our nature in its innocency, and in his triumph over death and hell: he has unbarred the gates of the grave, and set the captive free; and has assured us, that as he the first fruits is risen, so shall they also rise who are his at his coming. It is to be observed, indeed, that the Apostle in this Scripture infers no more from the resurrection of Christ, than the resurrection of the just, those who are Christ's at his coming; because this was what the

design of this chapter made it principally necessary he should prove to the Corinthians. The design is evident from the inference he makes from the whole in the last verse, viz. to support their faith under those discouragements and persecutions their profession in that early age exposed them to, that they might be *steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*. Now the proper argument from which this effect was to be hoped for, was such as convinced them that Christ would certainly raise them, and reward their patience and resolution, and make them an abundant satisfaction for all the afflictions they endured for his sake. He had therefore no occasion to extend his proof farther than the resurrection of the just, since this was sufficient to assure their expectations, and convince them that their labour should not be in vain in the Lord. And the same reasons will always account for those expressions of our Lord himself, which seem to confine the resurrection to his elect, whom he frequently promises to raise up at the last day, without any notice of the rest of the world. But that the resurrection shall be general, we are abundantly assured from other Scriptures: for thus our Saviour tells us (John. v. 28, 29.) *that all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation*. And St. Paul even in this chapter makes this also to be a consequence of our Lord's resurrection, where he tells us, *that as in Adam all (i. e. just and unjust) died, so in Christ should all (just and unjust) be made alive*. (v. 22.) I shall therefore consider this subject in general, as it regards the resurrection of the whole race of Adam; in treating of it, I shall at present look upon the resurrection of our Lord as a truth of fact established upon sufficient evidence, and acknowledged to be true; and endeavour from the latter part of the words before us to shew,

I. The certainty and connection of our own resurrection. And,

II. Direct you to those meditations this doctrine ought to suggest to us.

I. That our blessed Saviour, who was himself a divine person, and consequently

endued with the power of God, might by his own unbanded activity restore the body he had chosen to its former union, especially within the space of three days, when the balms and spices which the piety of Joseph had brought, had kept it so entire, that even naturally it could not have seen corruption, seems attended with a great many circumstances that make it reconcilable enough to the natural apprehensions of men, or at least abate much of the difficulties that might withhold our assent: but that a human body dissolved and crumbled into dust, without any trace or feature of the form it once appeared in, when all its lineaments are destroyed, and the whole mass of its materials, bones and blood, and sinews mixed together in an undistinguishable confusion; that (I say) such a disorder as this should ever be retrieved, that this blended mass should resume its former symmetry and proportions; is such an amazing instance of knowledge and power, that our most refined speculations can very difficultly conceive an art or artificer that can be equal to so stupendous an effect. But farther, if we consider these blended materials not only confused among themselves, or with the neighbouring bodies, but scattered and dispersed over the whole face of nature, the sports of winds and rivers, partly evaporated into air, and partly diluted into water, and fortuitously shared between all the elements, who shall find out or recall the wandering particles home, and fix them in their old vicinity? Had we indeed all our different cells and apartments in the earth, did vaults and sepulchres keep all human reliques divided and separated from the confusion of other bodies, it would be but like a curious machine taken into pieces, which, while the parts are preserved together, it is no great difficulty to the artificer to reunite to its former figure and motions; and whatever may be surprising to the ignorant in such a performance, the skill of the workman will easily account for: but what skill, or what power, shall recollect the dust, which winds and waves have dispersed over the face of the whole earth? Who shall discern a human particle disguised perhaps now under the appearance of air, or water, or plant, or

mineral, and, when discovered, command it back to the post it once had?

But the difficulty will yet increase upon us, if we consider a human body not only thus dissipated and dispersed, but devoured by fish or beast, and so entered into the constitution of another animal; nay, and perhaps in some periods of the several revolutions it undergoes, become the flesh and blood of another man; whose then shall it be in the resurrection? Who shall be the owner of this straggling dust, and to what proprietor shall it belong?

These are the difficulties that gave the doctrine of the resurrection so cold and diffident a reception in the world, and raised the scruples of the weak, and the contempt and ridicule of the pretenders to more accurate knowledge and learning. But had they duly considered the unlimited extent of infinite knowledge and infinite power, these two attributes had been sufficient to have silenced their scruples, and they had adored and not ridiculed the amazing mystery. He who saw and formed us in the womb, whose eyes beheld our substance yet being imperfect, and in whose book all our members were written, keeps every atom of them still under his eye, and pursues them through all the changes and revolutions they undergo: lost and insensible as they are to us, they are to his all-seeing eye so many distinct beings, in a fair and regular order. For though they fly up to heaven, he is there; or if they are thrust down to hell, he is there also: though they are scattered on the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall his omnipresence find them, and thence shall his right hand fetch them out, and lead them home to their ancient proprietor. Can the least particle of matter be so small, as to escape the knowledge of omniscience? Can it hide itself from him who created it, by whose appointment it succeeds into various stations, and is applied to serve different ends of his providence, and is employed by the great artificer sometimes in one part, and sometimes in another of the works of his hands? Though it runs through all the variety of bodies in nature, earth or water, plants or animals,

or even different men; yet it passes its several stages by the immediate commission and direction of the Almighty, and may by him be commanded to return to the same post it once filled. And as his knowledge is thus sufficient to find out the materials of which we were made, so his power is sufficient to put them together again. We know that the power of God can perform any thing, which does not necessarily imply a contradiction. Now it is certainly no contradiction that the same thing which once was, should exist again; that those particles of matter which were once united in the same body, should be restored to the same union. Can it be difficult to that Almighty Power, which first created man, and the whole world out of nothing; who can with a thought reduce it to nothing, and with a second restore it to the same form and order again, to command any parts of matter, however separated and divided from each other, into what order or appearance he pleases, especially to fit them up into the same symmetry and lineaments they once had? Nature is the art of God, and as he can take a body to pieces, and dispose of them where he pleases, to us perhaps not without the appearance of irretrievable confusion, but with respect to his own knowledge into the most regular and methodical repositories; so he can with the same facility put them together again, and renew their acquaintance with those parts to which they were formerly allied. It is agreed by those philosophers who are most inclined to dispute this article, that matter is unperishable in itself, and that all the destruction it can undergo, is no more than a passing from one form to another. The matter, therefore of the body must necessarily remain; and since matter, as such, is equally capable of all forms, those particles which before composed an human body, must at least be as capable as any other of being raised into that figure again. It is plain therefore that the materials must remain, and remain in a capacity of being reunited into the same form; and that the power of God is able to unite them is also evident, because it is no more than he actually has done once before. Since therefore God Almighty is allowed to

have knowledge and abilities equal to this great work, the only question that can remain is, whether he has at any time assured us that he will perform it? and for this we appeal to that revelation God has made of himself in Scripture. In the Old Testament indeed the discoveries of this mystery are less frequent and clear, than those he has given us in the New: yet they were such as to those who duly attended to the light they gave, afforded a sufficient conviction of this truth, and a firm reliance on the glorious promises contained in it. *I know* (says holy Job) *that my Redeemer liveth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.* (Job, xix. 25, 26, 27.) To this we may add that of the prophet Isaiah: *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* (Isaiah, xxvi. 19.) Thus also Daniel tells us, *they that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* (Dan. xii. 2.) These are scriptures of such express and unavoidable force, that one would think it impossible for so large a division of the Jews, as the Sadducees were, to resist the evidence of so clear an authority. But the providence of God, designing the last and most perfect declaration of his will under the gospel, has so clearly revealed this article to our faith in the scripture of the New Testament, that no one has ever doubted whether it were an article of Christianity. It is proposed in almost every page to the disciples of the gospel, as their great support under all the difficulties and persecutions they must expect, from the malice of a prejudiced world. Thus we find our blessed Saviour frequently encouraging his disciples with this promise, *that he would raise them up at the last day.* (John, vi. 40. 44. 54, &c.) And St. Paul confesses, that without this expectation, Christianity, under the disadvantages it then lay, had nothing engaging enough to recommend it to the world: *If in this life only we had hope* (said he), *we were*

of all men most miserably. (1 Cor. xv. 19.) It was the assurance of a resurrection that gave patience to the confessor, and courage to the martyr; and inspired the first Christians with that undaunted resolution, that they not only despised, but even gloried in their sufferings. And the great argument the Apostles appealed to for the proof of this article, is the resurrection of their Lord and Master, who is therefore called the *first fruits of those that sleep*, and an earnest of the resurrection of the whole human species. Christ has condescended to incorporate us into the same body of which himself is head, and has commanded us to depend on him, with this assurance, that as he himself is risen, so will he also raise up those to be his: as the head is glorified, so shall also the members be glorified with him: and where the head is, there shall the members be also: *And as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* (1 Cor. xv. 22.) But I shall not detain you with a recital of those proofs which might be brought for this article from the writings of the New Testament, but look upon it as allowed by every one to be a doctrine of the gospel. And proceed,

II. To such an application of this subject, as may be in some measure answerable to the great importance of it. And,

1. Let us reflect on that great and terrible day, when the earth shall be again in travail with her sons, and at one fruitful throe, bring forth all the generations of learned and unlearned, rich and poor, noble and ignoble dust, no longer differentiated and distinguished by titles and quality, but by the guilt or innocence of their lives. Let us frequently consider what figure we shall make in that great assembly, and how we are prepared to meet our Judge and our Redeemer. Piety indeed and innocence soften the terrors of this awful prospect, and make even death and judgment a desirable expectation. To the righteous it is the great strength of his hopes, the support and encouragement of his obedience; the hour, in expectation of which he patiently bears the burden and heat of the day, all the difficulties of duty, and the discountenance he meets with from a wicked and

profane world. That cloud of witnesses the Apostle mentions, who had trials of mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment, were stoned, sawed asunder, were slain with the sword, wandered in deserts and mountains, destitute, afflicted, tormented, not only bore their tortures with patience, but would not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. To a soul, supported with an assurance of the divine favour in that day, the honours or afflictions of this life will be equally trifling and contemptible. Is poverty and disgrace his portion? he knows it will determine in a few years, and that an eternity of glory awaits his perseverance. Are the infirmities of the body, pains and diseases, his complaint? his faith reminds him of the day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality; when this body shall no longer be that burdensome incumbrance it now is, subject to pain, and weakness, and passion; but spiritualized to a state of eternal youth, and strength, and beauty, to a similitude with the glorified body of Christ our Saviour. With what lively impressions of gratitude does he reflect on that unwearying care of Providence which conducts man from the womb, and gradually leads him to an immortality of glory; who protects him when alive, and guards him when dead, and makes even his grave but a repository to preserve the relics and treasures of his body; and from thence, as from a wardrobe, re-apparels the new man framed out of the materials of the old, and fitted for the fruition of himself in glory? With what joy does he share in the triumphs of his Redeemer, and behold the bonds of death broken, and the power and malice of hell defeated, our nature again cleansed and purified from the stains of original pollution, and restored to that felicity, that life and immortality, which the sin of Adam had spoiled us of? To the ungodly indeed, and the sinner, the prospect is not thus easy and entertaining: it is with confusion and astonishment he must reflect on that day, when every secret iniquity of his life, the sins of his chamber and his closet, shall be produced before men and angels, and an eternal irreversible sentence be pronounced upon the actions of men. Eternity

is in itself a prospect that human nature cannot look into without a religious awe and concern; our thoughts are lost in the endless view, and return to us weary and unsatisfied, without finding either bounds or place to fix on. Now to him who may reasonably expect to pass all this endless duration in torments, as great as an offended God can inflict, how dreadful must the approach of it be, and the terrors of it who can bear? He is tormented even before the time, and his damnation is begun on this side hell. Let us then in this our day suffer these reflections to have their proper efficacy, in exciting us to due preparation for that decisive hour: let it influence every thought, word, and action of our lives, to remember that the Judge standeth at the door; that the day approaches when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of God, and come forth to judgment. And above all things, let us offer incessant prayers to the Divine Majesty, that he would vouchsafe us the assistance of his grace, which alone can direct our course through this troublesome and sinful world, that when our Lord shall appear he may find us intent on the duties of our stations, may own us for his servants before his Father and the holy angels, and call us to the possession of that eternal and heavenly inheritance he has promised to those *whom when he comes he shall find so doing.*

SERMON LIX.

By Dr. ROGERS.

A good Life the best Ornament of the Christian Profession.

THUS, II. 10, *latter part.*

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

THOUGH the Apostles of Christ applied themselves to the conversion of mankind, principally by such arguments as proved the reasonableness and credibility of their doctrine; though they asserted the authority of their mission, and that they were preachers sent from God, by those

demonstrations of the Spirit, the miraculous effects of divine power which attended their ministry, and might challenge the greatest enemies of the gospel to object any thing to the morality of its precepts; yet still they appeared farther solicitous to enforce these arguments with that great recommendation to the esteem of the world, a correspondent purity in the lives of its disciples. This was a part of their ministry, in which they required their proselytes to concur with them: and particularly the apostle of my text commands Titus, not only to be a pattern of good works himself, but to use his episcopal authority in exhorting every rank and order of men, the young and the old, the husband and the wife, the master and the servant, to be exemplary in the duties of their several stations, and in every part of their conduct to adorn the doctrine they professed. By this expression of adorning the doctrine of our Saviour, it is obvious to understand advancing the credit and esteem of it in the world; behaving ourselves in such a manner, that the beauty of that holiness it prescribes may appear in our lives; and even the enemies of our religion may be forced to acknowledge the power and excellence of so venerable an institution. I shall endeavour to recommend this apostolical precept to your attention, by shewing,

I. That it is the duty of every Christian to be concerned for the reputation or discredit his life may bring on his profession.

II. I shall consider what conduct will acquit us of this obligation.

And, I. It is the duty of every Christian to be concerned for the reputation or discredit his life will bring on his profession.

For though this epistle be particularly directed to Titus, and in him to the bishops and pastors of the flock of Christ, yet this consideration is here rather suggested to him as a proper argument to persuade the obedience of those under his care, than a special direction to himself. The apostle had employed the former part of this chapter in prescribing the duties which it would be proper for him to recommend to every condition and relation of life; and then subjoins this, as an universal reason for their compliance,

that they might adorn the doctrine of their Saviour. He had before exhorted Titus himself to be an example of good works; and he is here commanded to press the same regularity on his whole charge from this consideration, that the honour of their religion depended on it. The ministers indeed of the gospel are especially required to shine as lights in the world, because the distinction of their station renders their conduct more observable; and the presumption of their knowledge, and the dignity of their office, gives a peculiar force and authority to their example: but the light of inferior Christians is also to be visible: and as no circumstances of life can place a man so far below the notice of the world, but that his virtues or vices will render him, in some degree, an ornament or disgrace to his profession, so none are below the obligation of this precept, to promote the credit of it.

For shall we all think ourselves bound to consult the reputation of our friend, or our family, and of the laws and constitutions of our country; and shall the honour of that God whom we serve, and the religion by which we hope to be saved, have no share in our concern? Can we with indifference hear the word of God, and the sacred name of our Saviour blasphemed; and at the same time reflect that the scandal of our lives gives the occasion for it? For, after all we can say to disparage the argument, men do and will judge of a religion, by the influence it has on the lives of its disciples; and be inclined to think contemptibly of that faith which has no apparent moral effect on the professors of it. Not all the subtle objections of sophisters and rabbies, against the truth and credibility of the gospel, so much prejudiced the reception of it in the world, as the reproach of those infamous crimes with which they aspersed the assemblies of Christians. And therefore the apologists of the church, in their vindications, appeal not so much to the purity of the rules and precepts of their religion, as to the innocence of their lives; and defy the malice of their adversaries to produce one impure, unjust, or intemperate person, among all who were called by the name of Christ. Thus was the gospel adorned in the innocence

and simplicity of its infancy; and thus were they of the contrary part made ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them. And let us not imagine that the reasons or design of this precept were confined to the primitive state of the church, or that the first converts only of Christianity were concerned to defend the honour of their religion from the spite and detraction of a heathen world. That spirit of unbelief, of reproach and blasphemy, which at first opposed itself to rising Christianity, continues still, and will always continue, to revile and persecute the servants of Christ. Even in these days of security and establishment, when the gospel has the defence and protection of national laws, have we not seen our holy religion exposed to public scorn as a farce or fable, every order of its ministry vilified, and the articles of its faith not only opposed, but ridiculed? Have examples been wanting, who have owned, and even gloried in profaneness and infidelity? And are we not encompassed by multitudes, who have hatred and evil will at our Sion; who watch every careless word, every unguarded action of our lives; who are ready to aggravate all our faults, to expose our infirmities, and traduce even our virtues themselves? And if the number and malice of their enemies was an argument to the first Christians for such a prudent and regular behaviour as would silence their calumnies, and procure esteem and reverence to the gospel, the same reasons should enforce this duty on us under the same obligations as the apostle enjoined it on them.

Christianity indeed will always demand this tribute from its disciples. It is implied in every one of its commands, that we should not only obey them ourselves, but use our best endeavours to recommend the same performances to others also. And since an exemplary deportment in the duties of our station, is the most probable method to produce this effect; to reclaim the dissolute, convert the infidel, and win the greatest enemies of our faith to a respect and veneration for it; this is an obligation which will never cease, but remain a necessary duty in all ages and circumstances of the church. Proceed we then,

II. To consider what particular con-

duct will acquit us of this obligation. In general there is something lovely and endearing in every single instance of duty prescribed by the gospel: a beauty which the most dissolute are forced to acknowledge, and the libertine himself to applaud and admire. How irresistible then are the charms of virtue, when the obedience is universal? when the graces of religion shine with an united lustre, and no crime can be objected to darken the character, and sully the perfection of the example? But I shall content myself at present to recommend the practice of some particular duties, of a more especial tendency to procure respect to ourselves, and honour to our religion; and those are,

First, An extensive love and charity, the bond of peace, and foundation of all the comforts of a social life. It is this most christian grace of our religion which softens our passions, appeases our resentments, and extends our beneficence to the miseries of our brethren; which inclines us to support the needy, compassionate the fatherless, and relieve the tears of the widow; which renders us the blessings and ornaments of the age in which we live, and the veneration of those which come after. And so lovely and obliging a disposition of soul cannot fail of endearing both us and our religion to the gratitude and affections of men. Let the fierce and implacable spirit of revenge be the character of our enemies; let them slander and traduce the innocent; let them rage, and persecute the poor and the helpless; but let it be our glory to be pure and peaceable, ready to forgive, and easy to be intreated; compassionate to the sorrows, and bountiful to the wants, of our greatest enemies. By this shall we vindicate the honour of our religion; by this shall all men know that we are the disciples of Christ.

A second virtue I would recommend as of peculiar efficacy to incline men to venerable thoughts of our religion, is firmness and resolution: a behaviour which, even in the moral accounts of virtue, has always commanded the highest respect from men. And as no institution of life has ever furnished its disciples with so powerful and generous motives of courage as the Christian, so nothing can derive so much honour on our religion, as on all

occasions to act up to the spirit and principles of it. Let a man's pretences to religion be never so great, and his conduct in other respects be never so regular, yet if he faint in the day of trial, if we see him shrink from an unacceptable duty, betray the cause of God, and prevaricate with the most avowed principles of his conscience, is it not natural to suspect that there is an evil heart of unbelief, a secret reserve of infidelity at the bottom? Especially if he be a man of any eminence for his knowledge or station; one who is presumed to have formed his principles upon calm and deliberate inquiries; and to be a master of all the arguments that can plead for religion: when such an one shall fall away, and act contrary to his most professed convictions, with what shame and confusion must all good men behold the example? what scandal must it give to the weak, and what triumph to the infidel? With what confidence will he conclude, that either our religion wants arguments to convince a reasonable inquirer, or encouragements to support its converts in perseverance. On the contrary, when we see even the meanest Christian stand firm in his duty, and hold fast the integrity of his profession; when we see him renounce his interest, his pleasure, and even life itself, in obedience to the commands of his religion, the most indifferent spectator must applaud the courage, the honesty, and sincerity of the man; and confess the power of that institution, which can infuse so much bravery and spirit into the souls of its disciples. It was the zeal and resolution of the first Christians, it was the patience of confessors, and the courage of that noble army of its martyrs, that procured respect and honour to the gospel; and prevailed more in the conversion of the world, than either the arguments, the oratory, or even the miracles of its preachers.

A third duty which will be always necessary to secure the credit of our religion, is a due obedience to the authority of our superiors. It was an early objection, and too successfully urged by the adversaries of Christianity, that it was an enemy to civil government; that it pretended to exempt the servant from obe-

dience to his master, and the subject from his prince. And as nothing could raise a greater prejudice against any religion, than an imputation of inconsistency with the laws and subordinations of government, so there is no reproach Christ and his apostles are more careful to obviate than this. Thus we find our Lord on all occasions disclaiming all pretensions to a temporal kingdom; commanding his disciples to render to Cæsar the obedience that was due to him: and though in strictness he tells us he might have pleaded an exemption from the Jewish tribute required of him, yet rather than countenance the aspersions that would attend his refusal, he exerted his divine power in a miracle to pay it. And as the same calmness pursued his apostles, so we find them equally solicitous to clear themselves and their religion from the scandal of it; inculcating the doctrine of subjection for conscience sake; and, in their own persons, submitting to the most unjust and tyrannical inflictions from the heathen tribunals. And though it was some ages before the jealousies of the civil powers were thoroughly reconciled to the assemblies of Christians, yet we find them at length so perfectly acquitted from this slander, that even Julian himself, the most implacable enemy that ever appeared against the gospel, reproaches his heathen subjects with the fidelity of the Christians. This was the ancient, and is, I hope, yet the unforfeited glory of our religion. The malice of its adversaries has in all ages laboured to deprive it of this honour; to expose it to the resentments of the magistrate as an encourager of sedition; and improve the particular miscarriages of some few into a general charge of disloyalty upon the whole church. But wisdom will still be justified of her children: That pure and peaceable wisdom, which always was and always will be the character of the church of Christ, will in the end refute the aspersions of its enemies; and the meek, the humble, the patient servant of Christ will be found the truest friend to Cæsar. And,

4. Let us crown these virtues with a prudent, affable, and courteous behaviour towards all men. It is indeed the inward

purity and sincerity of the heart that principally recommends us to the Searcher of spirits : but since God has also left it upon us as a duty to render his service amiable to others, these external decencies and ornaments of our conduct become a very important part of our morality. It is in these, the visibility and example of our virtues will chiefly consist. The great and more observable occasions of exercising our courage, our justice, or our charity, occur but seldom ; but these are of daily and constant use, to preserve a general benevolence, and endear our common intercourse between one another. Without this care, our best actions will lose much of their influence, and our severer virtues be often discredited with the appearance of evil. But how bright and lovely does every grace of our religion shine, when adorned with an humble and obliging behaviour ? beautiful as a jewel set in gold ; which, though it adds little to the intrinsic value, yet improves the lustre, and attracts the eyes and affections of the beholder. And therefore the apostles of Christ have not failed to make it a constant part of their instructions to their converts, to avoid all unseemliness and asperity of carriage ; to do nothing that may argue a peevish or froward spirit ; not rendering railing for railing ; on the contrary, to be gentle and condescending : if any man asks us to go a mile, to go with him twain ; to be modest and unassuming, in honour preferring one another : to be tender and compassionate, to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice. In general, to be studious of the peace and interests of our neighbour, and endeavour, by an affectionate deportment, to leave impressions of esteem and benevolence on all we converse with : whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, any praise, to think of these things. Our duty only must be too valuable an interest to be given up in a compliment, or sacrificed to the applause of men. If indeed we thus please men, and can be persuaded to any criminal compliances to avoid their resentments, or engage their favour, we cannot

also be the servants of Christ. There are proper occasions, on which we may be angry without sin. Somewhat of warmth and severity will become us when we rebuke the vicious, and disapprove the prophane ; and we are expressly required to appear with zeal and earnestness, when we are contending for our faith. But these duties may be complied with, without offending against that gentleness prescribed by the gospel. We may reprove the libertine, without rudeness or bitterness ; defend the articles of our faith, and resist those who oppose them, with a meekness and humanity, which will equally convince the world of our affection to the persons, and our zeal against the errors, of our brethren. But if passionate and unreasonable men will, notwithstanding our best care, be offended with us for doing our duty, God and all good men will applaud our integrity, and shame and contempt will be the portion of our enemies.

Let me then, in conclusion of this discourse, exhort you seriously to reflect on the great engagements we are under to assert the honour of that religion we profess, by an exemplary practice of the duties I have recommended. Let me address you not only as Christians, but as members of the purest and most apostolic church in the world ; a church, whose doctrines are derived from the clear fountains of the scriptures ; whose polity and discipline are formed upon the most uncorrupted models of antiquity ; which has stood unshaken by the most furious assaults of popery on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other ; has triumphed over all the arguments of its enemies, and has nothing now to contend with but their slanders and calumnies. The reproach of immorality is indeed a charge will always lie heaviest against an established religion ; because those who have no religion will generally profess themselves of that which has the encouragement of the law. But it is surely very unreasonable to infer any thing to the disadvantage of any church, from the practice of those who are really of no church and no religion at all. But whatever title we may have to this, or any other excuse, let us re-

ther endeavour to want none. Let us strive to vindicate the honour of our religion, by a pure and unspotted obedience to the rules and precepts it enjoins: this will more effectually secure the interests, and promote the credit of it, than either the eloquence of our preachers, or the authority of our laws. And, blessed be God, the righteous are not so failed from the earth, but we can still appeal to bright and numerous examples of virtue among us. The number and devotion of those who frequent our altars, and the many great and excellent works of piety and charity promoted among us, are a burning and shining light, such an evidence of the internal power of our religion on the minds of its disciples, as must command reverence from all who behold it, and ought to be allowed in balance against those examples, with whose crimes our adversaries are so ready to reproach us. But let us not content ourselves with being better than our enemies represent us; let us go on unto perfection, and improve in every grace of our religion. Let us add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge patience, temperance, and charity. Let us by a meek and quiet behaviour cut off all occasion from those who seek occasion, that they may have whereof to accuse us. And though we have all encouragements to hope that the evil day of persecution is far from us, yet let us always live in such a preparation of mind, that if God shall at any time call us to a trial of our faith, we may acquit ourselves with a courage becoming the hope and spirit of Christians. In sum; let the beauty of our religion appear in the holiness of our lives. Let our virtue shine forth as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day. Then shall our Zion appear fair and comely to her lovers, and to her enemies strong and terrible, as an army with banners. Then shall the righteous resort unto her assemblies, and even sinners be converted unto her: and every one that is near, and every one that is afar off, shall be induced to give praise unto God, and seeing our good works, to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

To whom, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

SERMON LX.

The Advantages of conversing with good Men, and the Evils of a contrary Conduct.

By Dr. ROGERS.

PSALM CXXIX.

I am a Companion of all them that fear thee,
and of them that keep thy precepts.

THAT the temper, the sentiments, the morality, and, in general, the whole conduct and figure of men, is influenced by the example and disposition of those they converse with, is a reflection which has long since passed into proverbs, and been ranked among the standing maxims of human wisdom, in all ages and nations of the world. And mankind seem to act with conviction enough of this truth, in the care they take to deter those whose welfare they are concerned for from the company of such, the expense or infamy of whose vices may endanger their fortunes or reputation. But because the generality of men appear much less solicitous for the purely religious consequences of conversation, it is my present design to recommend to your imitation the conduct which the Psalmist here ascribes to himself, both as it is itself a part of religion, and as an effectual method to secure us in the true profession, and encourage and improve us in the practice of it. In order to this it will be necessary for us,

I. To ascertain what measure of acquaintance or familiarity is implied in this notion of being a companion. I shall then,

II. Represent to you the advantages that will attend our conversing with good men. And,

III. The dangers and inconveniences we are exposed to by a contrary conduct, by being engaged in familiarities with wicked men.

I. Then, by being a companion of good men, may either be meant simply choosing persons of virtue and sound religion for our friendships and intimacies, or assisting them in the prosecution of any pious or righteous design; but the latter

of these is so natural and almost necessary a consequence of the former, that we may comprehend them in one view; and understand the reflection in my text as advising us to confine our conversations, as far as it is possible, to men of this character; and on the contrary, not to indulge ourselves in any confidence, or familiarity, with impious and profane men; but especially not to communicate with them in their vices, not to concur in any unjust, irreligious, or unmerciful action, and, as far as it is in our power, to avoid all intercourse with them, and, as the apostle commands, from such to withdraw ourselves. Not that we can imagine ourselves prohibited all manner of conversation with wicked men, for this would exclude us from performing the charitable office of private admonition or instruction, the most successful and almost the only method we can take for their reformation. Persons of that character generally keep themselves out of the reach of the public reproofs and exhortations of the ministry, or hear with such inattention or contempt, as renders them of very little effect to them, and consequently will either not be applied to at all, or, if at all, yet without much hopes of success; unless we are permitted so far to converse with them as the discharge of this office requires. This duty, indeed, lies with special obligations on the ministers of the church, who are bound to watch over every soul in their flock, and to be instant with them as well in private applications, and from house to house, as in the more public offices of instruction. But since the prepossessions these sort of men have generally conceived against us of the ministry, the reproaches of design or impertinence, with which they are apt to treat us, give other good Christians, against whom they are less prejudiced, greater probabilities of success with them, it is to be hoped they will think themselves not only permitted, but obliged to this sort of friendship and conversation with them.

But it is farther to be considered, in abatement of this restraint, that the great mixture there is in the business and affairs of life, the nearness of relation, or our

acquaintance with such persons as may have these occasions of correspondence with wicked men, will sometimes engage us in necessary, and frequently in accidental conversations with them. But these we cannot reprove as criminal, because they are altogether unavoidable. If we would absolutely decline the wicked, we must abandon human society, must retire into a desert, and, as the apostle says, go out of the world. What we are forbid, therefore, is receiving such persons into our confidence and intimacies, choosing their assistance for our friendships, or their company for the ordinary entertainments of conversation; these are acts of choice, and our own free election; and to these, therefore, it is reasonable the prohibition should extend. And even with regard to that unavoidable correspondence with wicked men, to which the business or accidents of the world may sometimes oblige us, we are certainly under thus much restraint, not to enter into any farther familiarity than the occasion requires, and to take care of our behaviour under them, lest we countenance the sin, while we caress the sinner.

But I must observe one instance, in which we are restrained from joining with wicked men, even in such offices of common life and civil intercourse, which might otherwise be indifferent and allowable; and that is, when the person is judicially separated from the communion of the church; with such an one it is the apostle's express command *no not to eat*; and the reasons of this prohibition are very obvious, because the design of this sentence will in a great measure be defeated, unless the whole congregation concurs in the execution of it: for neither will the sinner be reclaimed, nor others deterred from the like commissions, nor the infection of the flock be prevented, if the criminal be permitted the same freedom and correspondence with Christians, as before: his punishment will have no outward effect that can lead him to reflect on his sin; and when he meets with the same countenance and friendship from the rest of the world as formerly, both he, and those he converses with, will be encouraged to

despise the authority that inflicted it: and it is plain, that under the advantage of such a reception, he has just the same opportunity of corrupting others, as he had before. It may perhaps be imagined, that this exclusion from the ordinances of religion will answer all these purposes: but first, as to his corrupting others, unless he be deposed from some public office in the church, he is by this part of his sentence deprived of no opportunity he had before; secondly, as to himself, if he be a hardened sinner, as it must be supposed he is whom private and more gentle applications could not reclaim, this sentence only excludes him from what he had very little regard for before; or, if his crime was schism or heresy, his punishment is no more than he voluntarily chose. Now nothing can affect him in the nature of a punishment, but what deprives him of something he esteems and values, and the loss of which will render him uneasy; when therefore he finds himself avoided and neglected by his familiars, this affects him with a penalty the most sensible to human nature: this, if he has any principle of shame left in him, will awaken him to more serious thoughts of his condition, and give such considerations as are properly religious, a more easy access, and a more lively impression on his mind. It is therefore, I say, not only an obedience which we owe to the authority of our superiors, and the express command of an apostle in support of that authority, but a charity which is due from us to the souls of our brethren, thus to restrain our conversation from an excommunicated person, and by such a behaviour as will express abhorrence and detestation of his crime; both deter others from the like commissions, and humble him to such a sense of his guilt as will lead him to repentance, and save his spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus. The measure of our acquaintance or familiarity thus limited, I proceed,

II. To represent the advantages derived on us by observing these limitations, and confining our conversations to good men.

As to the religious restraint I last mentioned, the interdiction we are under from the society of persons cut off from the

church, and consequently our confinement to such as persevere in the terms of its communion, since this is expressly enjoined us by a divine command, we might assure ourselves without further inquiry, that the most beneficial effects will attend our compliance with it. But the advantages intended in this institution are obvious to the least degree of reflection; and even those I have already suggested are so great, and so naturally result from it, that nothing farther need be added to convince us of our interest, as well as duty, in observing it. I shall therefore consider, in a more general view, some common advantages we may hope for while we confine our conversation to men of virtue and religion. And,

First, I would recommend this choice as an evidence of our own virtue: for it will always be presumed, that men associate with persons of like dispositions with themselves. It cannot well be imagined, how friendship can long subsist between opposite tempers and inclinations: when men are so widely different in their sentiments and principles, in their pursuits and aversions, as the good and the vicious, it is impossible but they must soon grow burdensome and uneasy to one another; those things which are the mirth and pleasure of the one, provoke the indignation and abhorrence of the other; and under these perpetual occasions of disaster, familiarity must grow cold, and each be inclined to seek his entertainment in more agreeable company: and accordingly it is found in fact and experience, that the sentiments and inclinations, the virtues and vices of men, are what range and sort out mankind into their several clubs and societies. It will therefore, I say, be always, and with reason concluded, that he who herds with wicked men is himself of the same character. Whatever virtues may appear in him, they will be esteemed an hypocritical imposture on the world; and in his more retired pleasures, he will be presumed as much a libertine as the rest of his company; and consequently, we can by no other conduct avoid this appearance of evil, and preserve the reputation of our virtue, but by confining our conversations to

good men. This argument, which dissuades an intimacy with wicked men from its effect on our reputation, may perhaps seem rather prudential than religious. But if we reflect what scandal we give to many weak men, by so offensive a conduct: how it unqualifies us for the instruction or reproof of others; how it corrupts our example, and gives countenance to the vicious and profane, we shall be convinced that this motive is properly Christian, and ought to be regarded from considerations of great importance to religion. But,

Secondly, Our associating ourselves with good men, is not only a proof and evidence of our virtue, but the most effectual method both to retain and improve it. Our advantage from the conversation of good men may be considered more particularly with respect to their discourse; and their example. *The mind of the righteous* (says the Psalmist) *will be exercised in wisdom, and his mouth will be talking of judgment.* From him we shall learn, and by just arguments be confirmed in true principles of faith and morality: the maxims that govern his conduct are such as equally tend to promote private and public happiness; and even his mouth is bounded by innocence and purity; and the sense of his own duty will engage him to cultivate the same just sentiments and good dispositions in those he converses with, to instruct their ignorance, reform their errors, and as the Apostle says, *minister grace unto the hearers.* Perhaps, indeed, the gentle admonitions wherewith good men will rebuke the imperfections of their friends, may be uneasy to the pride of some tempers; but these *precious balms* (as the Psalmist calls them) are freedoms which wise and virtuous men will esteem rather favours than affronts. Holy David, though a prince, was sensible that his failings and miscarriages would make this consequence inseparable from his choosing the society of good men; but yet, rather than he would take refuge with the men that wrought wickedness, he makes it his request to God, that *the righteous should smite him friendly, and reprove him.* Psalm cxli. 6. And indeed there is no surer argument of a good understanding, and a Christian disposition,

than being sensible of the friendship of a proper reproof. But the instructions and reproofs of good men can hardly fail of these beneficial effects on those who converse with them, when we consider how they are enforced by a correspondent example. When we find a man prescribe nothing to us but his own constant practice, we can have no suspicion of disguise or insincerity: he is himself what he desires us to be, and therefore gives us the greatest security that he intends our happiness in the methods of life he advises, since he pursues his own by the same.

Example is confessed to have this advantage over all other methods of instruction, that it not only teaches us our duty, but convinces us of the possibility of our imitation. When we see a man of like passions and weakness with ourselves, and no otherwise assisted than we either are, or may be, going before us in the paths of duty, it confutes all lazy pretences of impossibility; it reproaches our imperfection; and if we have any thing generous in our temper, it shames us into emulation. Nay, I would observe farther, that the example of a good man is, generally speaking, the best direction we can follow in the performance of our duty: the most exact rules and precepts are subject to be misunderstood; some capacities at least will mistake their meaning; and though they sincerely endeavour to obey, will art far from the intention of those who delivered them. But the example of a wise and good man ascertains the sense of the precept, and shews plainly how it is to be obeyed: and the meanest capacity, when he sees a rule practicably applied before his eyes, can no longer be at a loss how it is to be performed. It may be observed also under this head, that Self-love is a very partial interpreter. We are apt to be fond of our opinions and practice, and perhaps without perceiving it to bend and accommodate the rule in favour to them: but when we apply it to the actions of other men, we judge with less interest, and consequently with more impartiality; whence it often happens that the notions of duty which we form from the example of others, is more correct and just than we derive from the rule itself.

To these advantages of conversing with good examples, we must add one which I think still greater, and that is the encouragement we receive in the performance of our duty. The shame of being singular is a weakness which has debauched the best and most ingenuous dispositions; but now by a constant view of good examples, we find that we are not alone, that we have numbers enough on our side to countenance us in our profession; and especially when we see wise men, persons of character and esteem, examples of duty, we are convinced that piety is no unreputable qualification, and that we need not be ashamed of our virtue; it will confirm our resolutions against the raileries or reproaches of the profane, and give us courage and confidence in our religion.

I might farther recommend the conversation of good men to our choice, from reasons of prudence and discretion. As that while we confine our intercourse to persons of this character, we are in no danger of treachery in our friendships, of fraud or injustice in our commerce: we have a security firmer than that of bonds and covenants, in their conscience and integrity: we are assured of a ready assistance in all our exigencies, from a conviction of their own duty: we have the satisfaction of conversing with men whose passions are under government and discipline; not to be affronted with trifles, nor provoked to any unreasonable resentment; difficultly moved, and easily appeased; men who are just and good-natured out of principle, in whose conversation we are secured from the slanders of the malicious, the envy of the spiteful, the censures of the impertinent, and the contempt of the proud: and in general, since so great a part of the uneasiness we complain of in this world is derived on us by the villainies and passions of unrighteous men, we can by no conduct more probably secure our happiness, than by confining our intercourse to men of virtue and religion. But my design being chiefly to insist on the religious advantages attending this choice of our acquaintance, I only mention these considerations as a collateral motive, and go on to engage you to it.

Thirdly, by representing the dangers

and inconveniences we expose ourselves to, by being companions of wicked men.

Evil communications (says the Apostle) *corrupt good manners*. The best resolved virtue cannot long defend its integrity against the continual sollicitations of a vicious acquaintance. As to our principles, the natural pride of men will make them restless and uneasy, till they get their sentiments and opinions received by those they converse with, and, till this is obtained, it is not society, but endless wrangling and controversy. And as to practice, the desire we have to endear ourselves to those we converse with, will insensibly engage us in the same pleasures and aversions with them: and it must be observed, as a farther circumstance of our danger, that the loose and dissolute are very industrious in communicating their principles, and gaining proselytes to sin. The natural shame and diffidence that attends vice, makes them zealous to encourage themselves by numbers, and form a party against religion: it is with pride they survey their increasing strength, and begin to think themselves a match for virtue. But it is with more than ordinary triumph they corrupt a man of pious and virtuous principles. It soothes their fears, and gives some ease to their scruples, to gain a convert who seemed to have all the conviction that religion could afford: this they are ready to look upon as a determination on their side, and decisive of the controversy between vice and virtue: and this is a conquest they never fail to attempt with the greatest application. For a virtuous man, while he preserves that character, is uneasy to their conversation. They look upon him, as the Wise Man describes their sentiments, *as grievous to their eyes to behold* (Wisd. ii. 15.); as one made to reprove their thoughts, to upbraid them with their offending the law, and object to their infamy the transgressions of their education: and therefore they never fail of their most artful and indefatigable address to silence this impertinent adviser, whose severity awes their excesses and restrains their freedom. And, alas! it is but too often and too easily they prevail. For though a well-directed conversation be one of the best methods to secure and improve our

virtue, yet it is the misfortune of our fallen state that this principle acts with the greatest force in the worst application, and the familiarity of wicked men more successfully debauches than that of good men reforms. For it is a work of labour and assiduity to form and preserve a virtuous disposition; it is a plant not to be raised without culture and management, and requires care and attendance to give it vigour, and defend it from a thousand accidents that may make it miscarry: but vice is the natural growth of our corruption; remote but our care and it soon roots itself, and spreads over the neglected soil. How irresistibly then must it prevail, when the seeds of it are artfully sown, and industriously cultivated!

What power less than an uncommon measure of divine grace can preserve even a well-inclined temper from the infection of a loose and profane conversation, where vice appears with the advantages of fashion and reputation, and virtue, on the contrary, is traduced and ridiculed? If he behaves with that sobriety and reserve, which his religion requires from him; if he either reproveth the immoral freedoms, or but refuses his applause to the profane mirth of his company, he is either quarrelled with for impertinence, or reproached for affectation and singularity. And how few instances have we of a courage, that can stand the shock of being the jest of his familiars: even modesty and good manners will help to corrupt him, and good-nature itself will endanger his virtue. In sum, what advantages can we expect, or rather what consequences are too terrible to be feared, from mixing in conversations where irreligion and profaneness, where a defiance of all rules, and a contempt of all that is holy, are the principles, and lewdness, intemperance, and vanity the diversions of the company; where the modest sinner is taught to ridicule Providence, conscience, and duty, and dispute himself into infidelity: his reluctance to disobedience will gradually wear off under these impressions, and sin become every day more familiar and less formidable: he will advance from one degree of wickedness and impenitence to another, till at last he becomes hardened without remorse or concern, and past

hopes of recovery. Give me leave then to make some short application of what has been offered on this subject, to the common occasions of life and practice.

If then our virtue and integrity have so close a dependence on the choice of our friends and familiars; if the society of good men be so necessary to direct and confirm us in duty, and the conversation of wicked men so destructive of our principles and morality; as we value the favour of God and good men here, and the inestimable rewards of duty hereafter, let us with our utmost care make the important choice, and let us remember that we are choosing vice or virtue.

This caution indeed was always necessary, even in the purest and most virtuous ages, but it becomes us to recommend it with more than ordinary warmth and concern, when the numbers, the figure, and the insolence of wicked men have almost established sin as a fashion; when every enemy of religion appears openly and undisguised; when infidelity, schism, and heresy, are esteemed arguments of good sense and a superior understanding, and vice and profaneness are the polite entertainments of the world. So melancholy a prospect should inspire us with a more than ordinary zeal to oppose some stop to the rising torrent, and check this overflowing of ungodliness; and, as the most effectual remedy that can be applied, to deter others and withdraw ourselves from the conversation of wicked men. By this alone we shall be able to fix a mark of shame and ignominy on vice, and recover its just honour and esteem to virtue. And this conduct is the more necessary in private Christians, because it has been one deplorable effect of these corruptions, and the miserable confusion of our religious divisions, to bring the public discipline of the church into a sad, and, it is to be feared, irretrievable decay: good men should be therefore the more zealous to supply this unavoidable defect, to distinguish such persons as the censures of the church (if duly executed) would exclude from their society, by marks of abhorrence and detestation; and, as far as their private conversation reaches, excommunicate the enemies of virtue and religion.

Thanks be to God, the world is not yet so bad, that we need fear a solitude;

from the practice; the righteous are not so failed from the earth, but we may still find men of virtue and piety enough for the intimacies of friendship, and the entertainments of conversation: or whatever we may want in the numbers of our acquaintance will be abundantly made up to us in their value. Nay even this complaint will every day lessen upon our hands; the credit and honour we shall retrieve to virtue by this conduct, will irresistibly gain it converts, and we shall have at the same time the satisfaction of making and enjoying good men.

To conclude: Let neither the power nor quality of the great, or the wit of the pleasant; let neither interest, vanity, nor fear prevail with us, to court the favour to flatter the vices, or applaud the profaneness of wicked men. Virtue and religion, heaven and eternal happiness, are not trifles to be given up in a compliment, or sacrificed to a jest. And if we are either ashamed or afraid to assert the cause of religion, and give countenance to the servants of Christ here, of us shall the Son of Man be ashamed, before his Father and the holy angels.

SERMON LXI.

The great Advantages of good Discourse, and the Mischiefs of the contrary.

By Dr. ROGERS.

EPH. iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

In application of another scripture, I endeavoured to represent the obligations we are under to choose good men for our friendships and intimacies, what limits this duty admits of, and what advantages would attend our compliance with it. The words I have now read to you lead us into an argument of great affinity with that subject, and direct us to the matter that should employ our common conversations: a direction indeed absolutely necessary to render the choice of our acquaintance, I before recommended, effectual to the advantages proposed from

it. The matter of our conversation comprehends that share of our words, or actions, by which we support our common intercourse one with another. As to actions, because they are not expressly included in this direction of the Apostle, I shall only observe in few words, that they must be limited by virtue and innocence. Actions of civil business are not only permitted under this character of innocence, but, when governed by justice and honesty, oblige us as necessary duties; but in actions of pure diversion, nothing farther is to be considered, than whether they are innocent: and with this restriction they are not only consistent with the sobriety of the gospel, but in many cases useful, if not necessary, to ease our cares, and relax our mind from the fatigue of intent applications, and recruit our spirits for a more vigorous return to duty. Thus feasts have been the unproved practice of the greatest examples of piety, in all ages; and our Lord himself honoured them more than once by his presence, and added to the provisions of one of them by a miracle: and as to the amusements of play, while they go no farther than a diversion, it must be too great severity absolutely to condemn them. But then these indulgences are abused, when our feasts, either by their excess or too great frequency, break in upon our temperance when play, either by our too constant or too long engagement in it, becomes like an employment or profession; or by our too great intention on it, betrays us to passion or avarice, and rather tires than relieves our mind. When diversions are either in their nature, or by such prevailing abuses as cannot well be separated from them, rendered dangerous to our virtue; when they expose us to the influence of evil examples, to the temptation of opportunity, and all the provocations that can solicit men to lewdness or intemperance; it is not only unsafe, but sinful, to join in them: with such unfruitful works of darkness, no virtuous or good man will have fellowship, but rather with abhorrence avoid them, and with a Christian zeal reprove them. But I go on to that branch of conversation which the Apostle here expressly directs, our words and discourse. This is a part

of our conversation of much greater extent, and consequently liable to more irregularities, than our actions either are or can be. For our actions are confined to the present objects, either the entertainments of the company, or the persons who compose it; but our discourse is no more confined than our thoughts, extends to all subjects, present or absent, past or future, and may be criminally employed on all, and therefore requires much greater care to keep it within the bounds of innocence and virtue. The Apostle in the words of my text has given us a general, but very full direction for our behaviour in this particular. In which we observe,

I. A prohibition from such subjects or expressions, as may shew a corrupt disposition in ourselves, or tend to infuse it into others.

II. A positive direction to such a communication, as is agreeable to the spirit of the gospel; such as *is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers*. I shall consider each of these distinctly, and then,

III. Exhort you with the Apostle to conform to this excellent rule, by representing the advantages of a conversation so directed.

I. Under the forbidden head, we are to rank all profane, irreligious, or immodest discourses; all that may discover or encourage a contempt, or even a slight regard to things holy (for all these come under the character of blasphemy). God and his service, and whatsoever relates to it, are subjects of too serious importance to be treated with mirth and levity; ought always to command our respect, and never be mentioned without awe and reverence: his holy name must not be appealed to on trifles, but be reserved sacred for the most weighty and solemn occasions of life. Our assertions and negations should be yea and nay, for whatsoever is more than these, in ordinary conversation, we are told is sin. Neither can filthy communication, i. e. lewd or immodest subjects or expressions, be esteemed proper entertainments for the mirth of a Christian. These are subjects which the Apostle commands should not be so much as named among us, as

becometh saints. Eph. v. 3. And indeed, he who can treat offences so provoking to God as jests and trifles; must have very little sense of the heinousness of them, and be under very slender restraints from the commission of them.

Another sort of discourses I would here mention as forbidden by the Apostle, are such as are injurious to our neighbour. The former offences indeed are so far reducible to this head, as they tend to introduce libertinism, and corrupt the manners of men, and consequently injure them in their most valuable properties, their virtue and religion. But the discourses I would here more expressly dissuade, are such as affect our neighbour with more immediate and direct, though, perhaps, not more dangerous injuries; such as reproaches, which provoke the passions of the present, or slanders, which traduce the reputation of the absent. When we sport ourselves with the imperfections or misfortunes of our brethren; when we entertain our company with scandal or detraction; when we either asperse the merit or aggravate the faults of our neighbour; we are guilty of an offence against this prohibition of the Apostle: these are effects of those unsociable passions, that anger and malice, he excludes; liberties forbidden our conversation, and irreconcilable to the temper of Christianity. And to these we must add, lastly, lying one to another; a vice subversive of the very ends and designs of conversation, the most odious to the God of truth, and equally the contempt and abhorrence of men. It is true, the greater part of these irregularities may seem provided against by the common rules of decency and good manners, and sufficiently discouraged by the neglect and reproach they expose men to; but it is evident, that in a general corruption of manners, these restraints are in many instances without effect; the notions of decency are then changed, and every vice becomes reputable and applauded, which is agreeable to the prevailing taste and corruption of the age. The laws of the gospel therefore are the only standing, immutable rule of morality; and the penalties affixed by God to the breach of those laws,

the only guards that can effectually restrain men within the true bounds of decency and virtue. But I proceed,

II. To the positive part of the Apostle's direction. The subjects that should employ our conversation, we are told are such as are *good to the use of edifying*, and which may *minister grace to the hearers*: *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt* (Col. iv. 6.); that is, such as may shew forth the grace of God dwelling in us, be an evidence of the soundness of our own hearts, and be of efficacy to preserve those we converse with from corruption. Now we shall comply with this precept, and may hope for these good effects from our discourse, when we entertain our company with observations either on the mercies or judgments of God, or the works of his Providence; when we encourage one another in a firm adherence to duty, either by the arguments and prospects of religion, or by the examples of those who have gone before us in perseverance; when we instruct the ignorant, direct the doubtful, commend the virtuous, or reprove the sinner. In short, as God and our duty should be always before the eyes, and have a share in the thoughts and regards of a Christian, in every period and hour of his life; so they must by no means be thrown by for so large a proportion of our time as is employed in conversation with one another. On the contrary, our Saviour has assured us that these subjects must enter into our most familiar intercourse, and has left it as a standing rule, by which our virtue and grace should be judged of, *that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart will bring forth good things, and the wicked evil; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. (Luke, vi. 45.) Where a zeal for the honour of God and the happiness of mankind is the governing passion of a man's heart, the effect of it will naturally appear in such discourses as tend to promote these ends: and as there is scarce any incident of life and conversation, but what is capable of being applied to some purpose of morality or religion; so a mind thus disposed will immediately perceive and improve the occasion, and be fond in engaging the company in such reflection.

tions, as to itself are most agreeable and entertaining.

Not that I would exclude the common accidents of life, and much less the business and affairs of it ; nay, nor even things of a pleasant and divertive nature, so they are modest and innocent, from being sometimes the subject of conversation. For as with respect to actions, though we are commanded to pray always, and the like ; yet the rule is not to be so understood as to forbid our attendance on necessary business, or sometimes on the diversions of life : so though this precept of St. Paul for religious discourse, be delivered without any reserve for business or entertainment ; yet the necessities of human life will oblige us to infer, that the Apostle left it to the common sense of mankind to make the exception : and all we are to conclude from it is, that virtue and religion should be subjects always in our view, and what we should chiefly labour to promote, in every part of our conversation. When we are engaged on different subjects, we converse only as men ; but when the truths or duties of religion are our argument, we then appear in a higher character ; we then converse as Christians, as men whose conversation is in heaven, as persons of great and generous pursuits, and whose ambition is raised above the little prospects of this world. But let us proceed,

III. To what I principally intended in this discourse, to enforce this exhortation of the Apostle, by observing the advantages of a conversation so directed.

I know nothing can be more justly charged with the slight and contempt which is put upon religion by some, and that coldness and indifference with which it is entertained by others, and in general that visible decay of true zeal and piety we observe and lament in the world, than the disuse of serious and instructive discourse in conversation. It is a very great, and, in its consequences, a very fatal point gained by the libertine, when he could not prevail on men of virtue and sobriety wholly to give up their religion, ~~but~~ to persuade them to confine it to the temple or the closet; to limit it to settimes, to certain and those narrow bounds, out of ~~which~~ our it should be improper and ridion, and For when once men had ban-aviour in

gion from so large a share of their time, as is taken up in conversation, the more solemn returns of it not only grew burdensome and disaffecting from the intermission; but the vicious and profane liberties, which assumed its place in discourse, left such a stain on the minds of men, as indisposed them for the good effects of our public assemblies; and by degrees introduced in some a total disregard of all religion, and in many debased the remains of it with such a mixture of vicious habits and principles, as rendered it no better than a superficial pretence, unacceptable to God, and ineffectual to the great ends proposed in the gospel. The first therefore and principal benefit we may expect from restoring religion to our conversations, is the reviving the declining sense, and retrieving the power of it; and that this conduct may be as effectual to the reformation, as the contrary has been to the corruption of the world.

That these are no unreasonable hopes will appear, if we consider the peculiar advantages by which this application is fitted to instruct our ignorance, correct our errors, and improve our inclinations to duty, more than either our public instructions, or the private applications of our retirements, which, if we exclude religion from our conversations are the only methods left for these effects. As to public instructions, it is observable that what we hear in conversation has this general advantage over set discourses, that in the latter we are apt to attend more to the beauty and elegance of the composure, than to the matter delivered; to look upon them as the effects of labour and art, and to consider ourselves rather as judges of the skill and abilities of the preacher, than as receiving directions for our life and actions. There are indeed great abuses of such excellent means of grace and spiritual improvement, but such as I am afraid will never wholly be removed, while men have the common passions and vanities of human nature about them: but now the instructions we receive in conversation, are infinitely less subject to these abuses: we are there
 ~ expectation of an accurate per-
 ~; the person who speaks is not
 ~ as distinguished by any station

or office, but as upon a level with the rest of the company, and prepared as well to receive as to give instruction: and as every one is permitted and expected to reply in his turn, the attention is unavoidably engaged to the matter and argument, and not diverted by fruitless criticisms on the skill or address of the orator. It is to be observed further in this comparison, that public instructions are liable to be mistaken, or not understood by the hearers. That which is plain to one capacity may be intricate and unintelligible to another. He has a great many objections to propose, doubts to be resolved, and questions to be answered, before he can apprehend or submit to the force of the argument. Now in conversation we have opportunity of satisfying all our scruples, of having what is obscure to us explained, what is doubtful confirmed, and being delivered from all possibility of error or mistake. Neither can our private applications to reading or meditation supply these defects in our public instructions, but are liable to the same inconveniences that they are. An author cannot answer our objections, or be more particular in the explication of his meaning, than he that speaks from the pulpit. But I go on to observe farther, that in one very important part of instruction, the reforming, the loose and vicious, private admonitions are without comparison the most effectual method; for public reproofs of sin delivered from the pulpit are, and for many necessary reasons ought to be, general, though by this they lose a great deal of their effect to particular men; for even well-disposed minds are contented to apply very little of them to themselves: but in private conversations the application may be more personal: the reproofs when so directed come home, and cannot be declined; the sinner is, as it were, taken in the fact, and cannot avoid the charge. Nay, if it be considered how seldom men of wicked principles and dissolute lives can be prevailed on to attend our public assemblies, and by how many strong prejudices their ears are stopped, and their hearts hardened against any impression from what is there delivered, we can have very little hope of reclaiming them by this method of instruction. But if

religion were once generally introduced into our conversations, as they could not avoid sometimes hearing their duty and their faults, so the friendship of the company would give the application a favourable access to their minds, unobstructed by those aversions which prepossess them against the public ministry. To which let me here add, that if religion were restored to its proper share in our conversations, that secret confidence of the sinner that others are as wicked as himself, though better concealed, and which perhaps is the greatest support to infidelity, would be entirely taken off. He has been taught to ridicule our public assemblies, as things only of form and fashion, as a trade in the preacher, and either custom or hypocrisy in his hearers: and in these sentiments he has been very much confirmed, by observing that at other times they can forget their piety, and appear as little confined in their mirth as the rest of the company: from hence he has been tempted to believe, that they had really as little religion as himself, but only less courage to own their infidelity. But when such a man shall observe us at all times the same, and that we carry our religion always about us, he must acquit us of disguise and hypocrisy, and be convinced that we are in earnest in our profession, that our virtue is the first principle and constant habit of our minds. And when he sees men of as fair titles to sense and reputation as himself, behave themselves as seriously convinced of their duty, it must shock his infidelity, and make him suspect his confidence, and think it worth his while to re-examine the arguments of religion, and consider more attentively whether he be not mistaken.

To close this argument: In conversation the tempers of men are open and accessible, their attention is awake, and their minds disposed to receive the strongest impressions; and what is spoken is generally more affecting, more apposite to particular occasions; and though less accurate, yet expressed with more life and spirit than is usually found in the compositions of the closet. And it is pity, opportunities so improvable to the greatest and most important purposes of religion, should be either thrown away on

trifles, or abused to the promotion of vice and immorality; and the things which might be so much to our advantage, be made the occasion of our falling. Give me leave then, in conclusion of what I have offered, to exhort and intreat you with the Apostle, to let your communication be agreeable to this excellent rule he has here prescribed us.

Let us then reflect that we are Christians, that we are called by the name of the Son of God, and baptized into an irreconcilable enmity with sin, the world, and the devil: that therefore neither the suggestions of our spiritual enemy, nor insinuations of the world, should prevail with us to do or comply with any thing, how customary soever, which may prejudice the interest we have sworn to promote, and reflect dishonour on our holy profession. If either the wit, the figure, or the friendship of wicked men can engage us to assist or acquiesce in immoral freedoms of a vicious conversation; if either the fear of offending, or the care of pleasing men, can make us applaud the lewd, or laugh with the atheist; if we can sit tamely and hear fools make a mock at sin, affront the God whom we serve, and vilify the religion by which we hope to be saved; be we assured that by whatever mannerly names we may palliate the offence, this is not modesty, but cowardice, and a traitorous desertion of our allegiance to Christ; that it is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame: a crime for which we shall one day be told we are unworthy of him.

Let us further reflect, that religion is not the business of some fits only and intervals of our life, to be taken up at certain days and hours, and laid aside for the rest of our time, but a system of precepts to be regarded in all our conduct, to direct us in public and private; in our business and diversions, in our retirements and conversations; and that all our thoughts, words, and actions, should either promote, or at least be consistent with our observance of these rules.

Let us remember, that God is present in all our assemblies, that he remarks and treasures up against the day of our account every word and expression, and every circumstance of our behaviour in

them. *By your words* (says our Saviour) *you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.* And, if every idle word shall be strictly accounted for at the tribunal of Christ, where shall the dissolute and profane, the liar, the slanderer, and the malicious appear? And lastly, let it not be thought that religion is too barren or too melancholy a subject for the entertainment of a Christian. It is indeed a stranger to those follies which usually pass for the diversions of company. It affords nothing to flatter the corrupt passions, amuse the impertinence, or sport with the vanity of men. But the subjects it offers us, as they are great and noble in the theory, and every way suited to the dignity of our understanding; so every step we take in the consideration of them, discovers so wise and so affectionate concern in God for our happiness, and opens such animating views to our faith, as must fill the mind with a manly and rational pleasure, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And if discourses on these subjects are burdensome or insipid to men, it is a strong suspicion their lives are such as render religion and futurity uneasy prospects to their fears. It is no wonder indeed if wicked men prefer the light flashes of a wanton mirth, which for a while suspend reflection and hide the sinner from himself, to such discourses as awaken conscience, and prophesy no good concerning them, but only evil continually. Or if men of virtue are at any time guilty of so much weakness, as to appear displeased with a serious and instructive conversation, it cannot be from an aversion to the argument; for it is impossible they should really be offended with such subjects, as are the great entertainment of their retirement: but it must proceed from too great a concern for the uneasiness of the company, and want of courage to oppose a corrupt and unreasonable custom. But if men had resolution enough to attempt it, these foolish discouragements would soon be removed. If good men with the liberty of an honest zeal opposed and reprov'd all profane or immodest freedoms in conversation, veneration and respect would attend them, and *the libertine would soon improve itself into a* *the libertine would retire to*

the stews, and profaneness be confined to the brothel. Joy, and peace, and esteem, would bless the dwellings of the righteous; and the purity and holiness of his conversation here, would prepare him for that heavenly society, into which nothing unclean shall enter.

SERMON LXII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

The great Duty of redeeming Time, and the Danger of neglecting it.

EPH. v. 16.

Redeeming the time because the days are evil.

IN the preceding parts of this epistle the Apostle reminds the Ephesians of the guilt and misery of their former unconverted estate, when they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world. This review he makes use of, as an argument of great force to quicken them in the improvement of those advantages to which the mercy of God had called them by the gospel. They were now the children of light, had a clear prospect of happiness and immortality opened to their faith, and were directed to the duties by which they might attain it. It therefore highly concerned them to reflect, how great obligations both the memory of their past misconduct, and their present advantages, laid on them to act as new creatures, to walk with care and circumspection, not as fools who trifle away life in a thoughtless security, but as wise men who have the noblest and most important end in view, and with the greatest attention watch every opportunity that may be improved to the attainment of it, and retrieve, as far as they are able, every mis-spent or unprofitable hour which has slipped from them. And to strengthen the influence of these reflections on their past and present time, he carries their view also forward, and observes to them, that the days were evil, that the prospect before them was full of danger and temptation, and therefore there was no time to be

lost in the application he recommended, but they should immediately set about the grand work of redeeming their time.

That this comprehensive precept may have its due influence on us, it will be of use to us to consider,

I. The extent and import of it.

II. The motives which recommend it to our observance. And,

1. This precept in the first view of the expression carries a regard to time past, and directs us to retrieve, as far as we are able, our former miscarriages.

2. With great care and attention to improve the present opportunities of life, to set a due value upon our time, and not suffer it to pass unprofitably from us.

3. To be provident for the future, and with wise resolution to guard against every thing that may lead us into misapplications of it.

1. This precept admonishes us to regain and retrieve the time past. Time indeed, in a natural sense, is irrecoverable, the moment that is but just fled by us it is impossible for us to recall; but in a moral sense we may be said to regain or redeem our time that is past, when we correct the mistakes of our former conduct, and repair the damages we may have received from it. And this, blessed be God, through the mercies of the gospel, is very much in our power: by a sincere repentance, and a more vigorous application to duty, the stains we have contracted by sin may be washed out, the penalties we have incurred be averted from us, and the innocence we have lost and forfeited be regained. This inestimable privilege Christ has purchased for us. He has paid down the price of this redemption of our time; and if we comply with the terms of the contract he has made for us, if by a sincere sorrow and contrition for our past offences, and a steady resolution of new life, we qualify ourselves for the favour, the veracity of God has assured it to us. By these applications and these only, it is in our power to retrieve the years we have spent in vanity, and revive our title to happiness. But then this implies,

2. That we use our utmost care and diligence to improve the present opportunities of life, and not suffer a day to pass unprofitably by us. For the way to

regain the past time is, to make a double use of the present. If he to whom ten talents were committed has squandered away five, he is concerned to make a double improvement of the remainder, if he would give a just account to his master. Every moment must be precious in his eyes, every advantage it offers be attended to and cultivated, and every danger it brings with it be guarded against with the greatest circumspection. Should we apply this precept only to those who are concerned to recover time they have lost, it would doubtless extend to the whole race of mankind. For who is there so righteous among us, as to be able to reflect even on one day of his life, in which he has done nothing which he ought not to have done, or left nothing undone which he ought to have done? But let him who is most without concern for the days that are past, remember, that *sufficient unto the present is the evil thereof*. Matth. vi. 34. The duties that every hour brings with it, the dangers and temptations that attend it, will minister full employment for our greatest vigilance; and he who makes the best improvement of his time will find he has none to spare. Not that the duties of religion, strictly so called, require so entire a devotion of our time, as to allow none to be otherwise employed. The proper business of every one's peculiar station must have a large allotment made to it; and he who conducts himself in the common affairs of life according to the rules prescribed by religion, is at that time obeying God in duties the most acceptable to him. Indeed, as a great part of our sins consist in some irregularities attending the ordinary pursuits of life, so our reformation must appear not in our laying those employments aside, but pursuing them within the boundaries of duty. Nay, some part of our time may lawfully and innocently be engaged in actions purely divertive. Some indulgence must be made for the recruit and refreshment both of body and mind, which under long attention are apt to sink and grow unactive, and lose that vigour and cheerfulness which are necessary to fit them for duty; and these intermissions, if moderately used, and properly chosen, will be allowed us by God in the account of

our time. But when diversion is made the business and study of life, when it engrosses either the whole or the greater part of our time, though the actions chosen be in themselves never so innocent, yet the excess will render them criminal; and the tenderest reflection we can make on a life so spent, is, that it is one great blank, which, though not blotted and deformed with sin, is yet without any of those characters of grace or virtue to which the promise of happiness is made. But as it concerns us carefully to improve the present time, so is it,

3. Our duty to be provident for the future, and wisely to guard against whatever may lead us into misapplications of it. He who at present stands is cautioned by the Apostle *to take heed lest he fall*; the difficulties and temptations which attend our course will more easily be borne or avoided, if with prudent foresight we arm ourselves against them. And in this conduct of spiritual wisdom, we shall be very much assisted by reflecting often on our past miscarriages, by observing what are the sins that most easily beset us, by what illusions they have prevailed, and what circumstances of life have most usually led us into them. By such a review we shall be enabled to discern and strengthen our weaknesses with good resolutions, and so to dispose and order our future conversation as may render us least exposed to the occasions of our falling. And of equal use will it be to look also forward, to consider what evil the next day may probably bring forth, and with wise presumption of the enemy prepare and fortify ourselves against our conflict with him. If we thus guard our future, and thus carefully improve our present time, we shall assuredly redeem all that we have lost, and lay up in store a good foundation against the day of necessity. I go on then,

II. To consider the motives and inducements which recommend this conduct to us.

As the precept in the first intention of it carries a retrospect to time past, so the first argument from which the Apostle recommends the observance of it, is taken from that review. When we reflect on our former transgressions, that we have provoked the Author of our being, on

whose pleasure all our happiness depends, to whose bounty we owe those very faculties by the abuse of which we have offended him, what shame and indignation must it raise in our breast, what zeal to retrieve the miscarriage, and by the most vigorous application to duty to atone for our past ingratitude? And when we recollect the infinite danger to which we have been exposed, that we have perhaps for many years walked upon the edge of a precipice, while nothing but the slender aid of a human life has held us up from sinking into endless misery; with what trembling eagerness should we seize the important present, and labour to rescue ourselves from this state of terror? These reflections on our past miscarriages, the Apostle enforces,

Secondly, By reminding us of the present graces and indulgences vouchsafed us, for the improvement of which we are accountable to God. It is an instance of mercy which demands the utmost returns of the sinner, that the divine compassion has hitherto spared him, and not cut him off in the midst of his iniquity; that he has given him one day more to provide for his salvation, and flee from the wrath to come. But his gratitude must be under still farther obligations, when he reflects on the various means of grace that are offered him; the clear light and direction to duty which he enjoys; the noble encouragements proposed to his obedience; the many calls of God by his word, by his ministers, and by the secret whispers of his Spirit, to close with these overtures and be saved. How sore a burden must it add to our account, if we are unprofitable under so many applications? How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? To the redemption of the past, by a due improvement of the present time, and a wise provision for the future, we are farther persuaded by the Apostle from this consideration, that the days are evil. This reflection might, perhaps, especially regard the difficulties and distresses to which the early profession of Christianity was exposed: but surely there is no age of the church to which this argument may not be applied in a very persuasive sense. Difficulties and temptations will never be wanting in the

prospect of Christians, which will require their greatest care and attention to guard against them. They have an adversary strong and subtle, whose malice will never cease to attempt their subversion, against whom our utmost precaution and the most powerful weapons in the armoury of God are represented as defence little enough to enable us to stand. And if at the same time we consider the number of wicked men in the world, with what assiduity they are ever labouring to corrupt our religion, and ensnare our virtue; some to pervert the faith by heresies, others to break the communion of saints by schism, and others by libertine principles and vicious examples to debauch our morals, we shall conclude that this argument of the apostle will at all times deserve our attention, and enforce the precept it is here applied to. Our whole life, indeed, in this world may properly be described under this character of evil days; a state of danger, temptation, and infirmity; a pilgrimage through a difficult and perilous wilderness, which requires us to attend diligently to our way; if we have gone wrong, to redeem the mistake; if we have loitered, to quicken our pace, and make the most of the present opportunity; and at the same time to look carefully forward, and with wise circumspection guard against the numerous evils which on every side beset us.

The several duties implied in this precept of redeeming our time, and the arguments used by the apostle to recommend it to our observance, I beg leave farther to enforce by these general considerations.

1. These duties cannot but appear of infinite concern to us, when we reflect how short and uncertain our time is. This may, perhaps, be thought so trite and obvious a reflection, that none can want to be reminded of it; and indeed in the affairs and pursuits of this life, it seems to be enough attended to. The man intent on the world need not be persuaded to make haste to be rich, nor the ambitious to seize the first opportunity of advancing himself to honour; and the great maxim of the libertine is, *let us eat and drink, and enjoy as much pleasure as we can to-day, for to-morrow we die.*

And yet in the pursuit of our immortal interests, where it ought to have the greatest influence, this obvious indisputable truth is little regarded by us. In this respect *the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light*: admitting their principles to be true, that the only portion of man is in this life, they act wisely; they keep their end, evil as it is, steadily in view; improve every incident to the promotion of it, and leave nothing to be done to-morrow, which may be executed to-day in advancement of it. But how often shall we see men, professing themselves Christians, acknowledging the doctrines, and valuing their hopes in the promises of the gospel, and yet with strange inconsistency putting off all concerns for the attainment of them from day to day, and from year to year? Every interest or pleasure of life, even the most trifling amusement, is suffered to postpone the one thing necessary. Some time or other the man resolves to set about it, but it is soon enough yet: he must first acquire such a degree of fortune, place himself in such a station of life, and then he will give over all farther pursuits of this world, and make provision for another. This also is the foolish scheme of the epicure. He cannot yet disengage himself from the company, the mirth, and the pleasures he has been used to; but in a few years his circumstances of life will be altered, and his desires be more easily governed, and then he will apply himself in earnest to works of penitence and religion. But when this projected time comes, some new illusions arise, which deter the intended reformation a little longer. Our later vanities succeed into the same power and dominion over us that the former had, and the answer to religion continues still the same: *Go thy way for this time, at a more convenient season I will send for thee.* Acts, xxiv. 25. But what season can be so convenient, as the present? How know we that a day, that an hour longer will be granted us? that our souls shall not this night be required from us, laden with those unpardoned sins for which we proposed to repent even to-morrow? Methinks this is a reflection which, if attended to, should strike terror

and amazement into the securest sinner ; engage him with fear and trembling to lay hold on the present moment, and not suffer it to pass without improvement by him. Even he who has the fairest prospect of life before him, who rejoices in the strength and beauty of youth, yet if he considers by how precarious a tenure he holds these advantages, that a thousand accidents may before the next dawn lay all these glories in the dust ; and, if this very possible event should happen, he must immediately enter upon an eternal unalterable state of happiness or misery ; that if he has made no provision for this great change, the omission can never be repaired, the time misspent never be redeemed ; that he is lost and undone for ever, condemned to everlasting anguish and despair ; can he stand against the terror of so awakening a reflection ? Can he go calmly on, and leave so important, so irretreivable an interest at so much hazard and uncertainty ? When a near and certain approach of death sets this prospect before us, it seldom fails of its influence on us. With what regret will the wounded soul then look back on the years it has wasted in pursuits of vanity ? How will he wish to recal the precious hours he has spent in trifles, loitered away in idle, unprofitable diversions ? And if by due reflection we at any time bring this prospect to be equally present to us, it will have the same effect and impression on us. And what charm is it that can thus draw a veil before the eyes of men, and hide this important conclusion from them ? What ! though the lamp of life be full of oil, and burn strong, yet when we consider that a blast of air may blow it out, that a shower, a drop of rain may extinguish it, and that it is every moment exposed to these accidents, shall we defer a work on which our eternal happiness or misery depends ; a work which cannot be done but by this light, in a vain confidence of its burning down to the last possibility of life ? *Rejoice, O young man* (says Solomon in a severe sarcasm), *and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for these things God will bring thee into judgment.* Eccles. xi. 9. To those surely

who have gone far and long in the ways of sin, we need only observe, that the day is far spent, and the night is at hand ; that they have much time to redeem ; have already spent the fairest part of their portion, and therefore are concerned with the utmost solicitude to husband the poor remainder. It is something peculiarly shocking to see gray hairs, and the infirmities of age, squandering away the last stake of life in sin and folly, without remorse for the past, and thoughtless of the future. With whatever delusions we may flatter our own security, such examples are not looked on without terror and concern. And I question not but each beholder resolves to be wiser for himself, long before that age to abstract from the world and reform, and not leave the whole task of the day to be wrought out at the last hour ; at least to devote that period wholly to religion, and the care of eternity. But alas ! how few are prevailed on to make the proper inference from these observations, to reflect that it is not only uncertain whether they shall arrive at that period, but uncertain also whether they shall employ that last reserve better than others have done before them ? That though the day of their natural life may continue to that time, yet their day of salvation may expire before ; and from these just apprehensions to conclude the wisdom of attending to the present calls of grace, lest they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and the slighted mercy be withdrawn from them ?

To this consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of our time, let us farther add the greatness and difficulty of the work we have to perform in it. To subdue the lusts and passions of our corruption, to correct the evil propensities of our nature, to possess the soul with the reverence and love of God, to sow and cultivate in it the seeds of grace, and improve them into settled habits of piety and virtue ; in short, to prepare it to be a fit inhabitant of that holy place to which we aspire, is a work not to be accomplished in a moment, but to be brought to perfection by slow and gradual advances, through several hard and laborious stages of discipline. Various mortifications must be undergone, many

difficulties and obstructions conquered, many strong attacks of the enemy withstood, before we can arrive at a just maturity in religion, at the firmness of an able and faithful soldier of Christ. A work thus difficult can never be begun too soon; it is the business of our whole life, and he who sets earliest about it, will find his time little enough for the finishing of it; but the longer it is deferred, the more difficult it becomes; he who begins late is not only obliged to learn to do well, to form anew the whole disposition of his soul, to acquire new habits of life, to practise duties to which he is utterly a stranger; but, which is a much harder task than this, he must unlearn all his former life; renounce gratifications he has long been used to; divest himself of habits which by custom have grown up to be a part of his constitution, and are become a kind of second-nature to him; contend with an enemy that has long subdued him; resist the strongest temptations from the violence of his own desires, the importunity and reproaches of his old companions in sin, and, which perhaps is not the least mortifying part of his discipline, he must humble himself to an acknowledgment of his own folly. And when we consider that all this is to be performed under the pangs and remorse of a wounded conscience, and a continual dread lest the evil day overtake him before he has finished his work and made his peace with God, how great must the labour, how severe the conflict be? Since then the burden of the work increases with the delay, with what persuasion should this argument recommend to us the immediate dispatch of it? The question of Nicodemus, *Can a man be born again when he is old?* may not improperly be asked even in that spiritual sense meant by our Saviour. Through the grace of God this is not impossible: but when we reflect how unfit we are for any weighty performance in that unactive part of our life, how often the faculties of the mind are as much decayed as those of the body, how many imperfections will attend even the best we are able to do, the diffidence we must be under whether God will accept our poor defective services, whether he will re-

gard our sacrifice when we have nothing to offer him but the dregs and refuse of life, the days of loathing and satiety; and the years in which we have no pleasure; what amazing folly is it to defer the great business of life to a time the least qualified for a due performance of it? Each of these arguments, one would think, were sufficient to recommend to us the wise advice in my text; but when they are collected together, and set before us in one view; when we consider how short and precarious our time is, the difficulty of the work to be accomplished; that every day both adds to the difficulty of the service, and takes away from our strength to perform it; how uncertain it is whether the years we propose to ourselves shall be indulged us; uncertain whether we shall have power or even inclination to improve them better than those we now squander away; and uncertain whether God will accept so maimed and defective an offering; and lastly, that the stake we leave to the hazard of so many uncertainties, is nothing less than our eternal salvation; when, I say, these important considerations are brought together, and set before a rational being intent on happiness, and acknowledging the truth of every article, could it be imagined that a bare single possibility should be of weight enough to overbalance them all? And yet thus it is; this is the whole strength of the sinner's confidence; it is possible he may live to be old; it is possible the grace of God may then enable him to redeem the years he has lost, and receive him to mercy: but how much more possible is it that all these schemes may miscarry, and how dreadful is the event if they do so!

Whoso is wise will ponder these things, will understand the loving kindness of the Lord, and learn to value and improve the opportunities before him. He who has lived with the greatest care, will find upon a review of his time that he has something to redeem; but he who has mispent much, has still a greater concern upon him: hard is the task he has to perform, and short the time in which it must be performed; yea, the greater the work, the shorter the time; and therefore with the greater diligence should he

apply himself to the improvement of it. In sum, he who has wasted much of his stock, is concerned attentively to improve the little that is left; and he who has been most frugal, need not be at a loss for the employment of it all. May God give us grace seriously to regard these important truths; *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; by a prudent management of the present day, to retrieve the errors of those that are past; and lay up something in store which may support us in the evil day, and abide with us for ever.

I beg leave only farther to observe how peculiarly the present holy season suggests these reflections to us. We are now more disengaged from the pleasures and divisions of life, that the mind may cool, and be at leisure to attend to its domestic concerns, to consider what habit wants to be corrected, what inclination to be subdued, what weakness to be strengthened, and what virtue to be confirmed and improved. Spiritual revelation is, indeed, at all times a duty, and there passes not a day but gives us occasion for it; but since what is left to be done at any time, is very apt to be wholly omitted, the ancient usage of the church has with great piety and wisdom appointed certain seasons for this exercise, and recommended such restraints as may dispose us for it. The more bodily exercise of abstinence, or retirement from pleasure, the apostle determines to profit little, is of no other real value in religion than as a ministerial cause of moral effects; as it recalls us from the world, gives a serious turn to our thoughts, and disposes us to an attentive revival of our conduct.

Pray God give us grace to improve every call and opportunity to these excellent purposes, by a wise employment of the present time to retrieve the errors of our past life, and lay up in store such good resolutions as may strengthen us against the evil day of temptation, and enable us so to pass the waves of this troublesome world, that we may finally come to the land of everlasting life, where our labours and our fears shall cease, and sin and sorrow shall be no more.

SERMON LXIII.

By Dr. ROGERS.

The Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration, or a New Creature, explained.

2 Cor. v. 17, *former part.*

If any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.

ALL the privileges of the gospel relating to our present state, are comprehended in the promise of the Holy Spirit, who regenerates and sanctifies all the elect people of God. The effects of this promise every good man feels and experiences in the comforts, assistances, and direction he receives from him: neither will any true Christian deny that it is he who works in us both to will and to do; that without him we cannot so much as think a good thought; that it is he who enlightens our understandings, corrects our vills, and enables us to subdue our affections to the law of God. By these effects and operations of the Holy Spirit, the man is so much altered from what he was in his corrupt state, that he is said in my text to be *a new creature*: and in other places to be *regenerated*, born anew, to have killed or crucified the old man, and to have a new man raised up in him. From which expressions some have conceived and taught, that in this work of the Holy Spirit, on every sincere convert of the gospel, there is something literally killed and destroyed in him, and an act of real new creation exerted by God; a new being produced by his almighty power, and raised up in him. Now this notion might be let alone and despised as a piece of harmless unintelligible enthusiasm, if no evil consequence to the faith or practice of Christians had followed from it. But when it is farther inferred, that man in the work of his conversion, in receiving or obeying the gospel, is merely passive, contributes no more, and can contribute no more, than he did to his natural birth or preceding creation, or than he shall do to his resurrection from the dead

at the last day; the obvious and natural consequence hence is, that it is to no purpose for any man to labour and apply himself to the works of conversion, to convince his faith by attending to the evidences of the gospel, or to regulate his affections and actions by the laws of it. He has nothing to do but to sit still, and wait till this almighty creating Spirit comes, and irresistibly infuses this new principle into him. A doctrine which so manifestly tends to discourage the endeavours of men, to introduce a lazy inactivity and neglect of the ordinary means of grace, and even to quench the Spirit; and suggests such an excuse for all sin and infidelity, if it be false, as it certainly is, cannot but require our utmost zeal in opposing and refuting it. I shall therefore endeavour,

I. To shew that this doctrine cannot be the proper exposition of my text, nor of any other scripture whose authority may be pretended for it.

II. I shall offer and assert what I think the true meaning of this and the like expressions.

III. I shall observe what sentiments and duties this scripture, in its true import, ought to suggest to us. And,

I. I am to shew that this doctrine cannot be the proper exposition of my text, nor of any other scripture whose authority may be pretended for it.

The Scriptures being acknowledged to be the word of God, and therefore infallibly true in every part of them, we are assured,

1. That no proposition contradicting any evident truth, natural or moral, can be the intended sense of them. For we rationally may and ought rather to reject any pretensions to a divine revelation, however supported, than believe that God can affirm to us an evident falsehood.

2. That where two propositions contradict one another, one of them must be false, and consequently cannot be affirmed by God: when, therefore, a sense of scripture is given which contradicts another scripture, one of the places must be misunderstood. And, as a corollary, hence I add,

3. That where the expression in one such place is plain, and the sense affixed to it agreeable to the proper force of the

words, and no negative objection requires us to depart from it; and the expression in the other is figurative or allusive, and the doctrine deduced from it liable to great objections, it is reasonable in this latter place to restrain the extent of the figure and allusion to a consistency with the plain affirmations of the former.

Let us then apply these rules to the scripture in question before us: I say then,

First, that the exposition which I reject offers us a doctrine irreconcilable to those attributes which the natural idea of God implies, viz. that man is purely passive in the work of his conversion to God, contributes nothing to it by any endeavours of his own, but only submits to an irresistible act of God. Some of the first attributes which occur to us in the divine idea, are perfect justice, and perfect goodness: whatsoever doctrine represents God as unjust or unmerciful, cannot be from God, because it contradicts a manifest truth, and indeed subverts the very foundation of religion. And for the same reason we cannot admit such a doctrine to be the intended sense of any book, or words, which we acknowledge to be a divine revelation. Now if man is purely passive in his conversion and regeneration; if, as this doctrine supposes, no man can be converted but by such a new creation, such an overpowering work of the Spirit as no man can resist, then all men are equally capable of being converted; for there can be no difference in the subjects, where the application is almighty and irresistible, as in creation; and consequently, according to this doctrine, it must be resolved wholly into the absolute irrespective will of God, that some to whom the means of conversion are offered, are converted and saved, and others perish in unconversion. But how can this be reconciled to divine justice? Can it be just in God to condemn a man for not being converted, when it was impossible for him to be so? for not being new-created, when he alone could new-create him, and would not? Much less can this doctrine consist with the perfect mercy and goodness of the divine nature. Can goodness, perfect goodness, condemn his creatures to eternal misery, for not complying with con-

ditions which he knows it impossible for them to comply with? Surely we can hardly draw a more consummate image of cruelty than this doctrine ascribes to God, which represents him as calling to these poor devoted helpless creatures, pretending the greatest concern and compassion for them, offering them terms, and prescribing means of attaining eternal happiness, though he knows at the same time that it is impossible for them to comply with those terms, or use those means, without such an irresistible operation of his Spirit as he resolves to withhold from them. This is representing God not only as unjust and cruel, but as solemnly sporting himself with the misery of his creatures. If this doctrine gives us the true and proper sense of these scriptures, this is the image in which God must appear to us, an image repugnant to the natural idea of the Deity; and therefore we may with assurance conclude that this cannot be the meaning of them. But,

Secondly, This doctrine is also manifestly inconsistent with the plain declarations of God in other scriptures, and therefore cannot be admitted to be the sense of these. He frequently professes that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, and that he would have all men to be saved. He calls upon the sinners to turn themselves and live. He tells us that he has set before us life and death, and referred it to our own election, which we will chuse. He prescribes laws and ordinances, and pronounces, *This do, and thou shalt live.* And wherever we find our own abilities too weak for the performance, he assures us of the assistance of his Holy Spirit. *Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Is God sincere in all these declarations? Or is he only mocking the weakness of his creatures? This must be his character, if we believe that at the same time he knows it is, and resolves it should be, impossible for those he thus addresses, to comply with the overtures he makes to them. Shall we thus conceive of a wise, a just, and a good God? Shall we ascribe to him the levity of forgetting himself, and at other times teaching us a doctrine contradictory to all these gra-

cious professions? God forbid! yea, let God be true, and every man a liar. When we hear him in express terms affirming, that every man shall be judged according to his own works (John, v. 29. Rev. xx. 13.), and receive according to his deeds, can we doubt but there is a sense in which the works of every man, good as well as bad, are properly his own? When our blessed Lord asks (Luke xii. 57.) *Why do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right?* does not the question necessarily imply, that we have in ourselves a power of judging what is right? Nay, does not every precept, exhortation, or command of scripture, suppose these faculties in us? To what purpose, for instance, did our Lord preach and offer the motives of conversion to those who heard him, if they had no power to discern their force, or comply with them? God is able, indeed, out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. But would infinite wisdom use arguments and rational persuasions to these stones? would he encourage their faith by promises of reward, and threaten their infidelity with his severest resentments? Would he thus address beings which were perfectly passive, and could be nothing else but what he by an Almighty irresistible act must make them? And what is yet more unaccountable, would he complain of their resisting his omnipotence, and lament over their infidelity, in those expressions of regret and disappointment; *How often would I have gathered thee under my wings, and thou wouldst not?* Matt. xxiii. 37. Nothing is more evident than the force and import of these scriptures, and nothing more contrary to the conclusions I am opposing. Either therefore these scriptures, and those whose authority is pretended for these conclusions, contradict one another, which cannot be supposed of a divine revelation; or else we must find a sense in which they are reconcilable, which can only be done by assigning some other exposition to one of them. And when the doctrine affirmed by one, is the plain and necessary import of the words, a doctrine without any objection from reason, agreeable to the natural sentiments and perceptions of every one's own mind; and the ex-

pression in the other manifestly figurative, the doctrine raised from them shocking to reason, repugnant to the idea of God, and in its consequences subversive of all religion; in which is it most reasonable to suspect the mistake? Surely in the exposition of the latter. And if the expressions in these figurative places are capable of any sense free from these absurdities, it ought without any hesitation to be admitted: such a sense I am to endeavour,

II. To propose and assert.

That the expressions of *being born again* (John, iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 23.) *having a new man raised up in us* (Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.), and in my text, of *being a new creature*, are figurative, I have affirmed, and think it cannot be disputed; for that is a figurative expression, where the words are used in a different sense from what they signify in their first and ordinary intension. Now it is plain that he who is converted from a state of sin and death by the preaching or application of the gospel, is not born again, raised from the dead, or created anew, in the first and ordinary sense of those words; they must therefore be understood only in a sense of resemblance and analogy.

If it be said, that the new creation here asserted, is of a principle, a new spirit which is infused into and actuates the man, I observe,

1. That the expressions will not bear this construction: for it is said that the man, the same man, is born again, is a new creature, &c. The man therefore is the subject of whom this new creation, whatever it means, is affirmed. Now it is evident that the converted man is personally the same he was before, and is neither born nor created anew in a proper literal sense. I would ask,

2. What is this spirit, this principle which is supposed to be created? All the effects which this principle is said to produce, are in scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost: it is he who guides, sanctifies, and comforts the elect, and works in them *both to will and to do, according to the good pleasure of God*. Phil. ii. 13. And the human nature is certainly a subject very susceptible of these operations.

Since this new creation and all the effects of it are in scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and it is plainly affirmed that it is the man who is the new creature; and it is evident to common sense that the man is not in a literal propriety new created, the expression is manifestly figurative; and the natural and obvious sense that arises to us from it is, that by the influence of the Holy Ghost, a great moral alteration is produced in him. And what we are to understand by them, is plainly this, that the fall of Adam having derived on human nature an universal corruption of all our faculties, on the understanding a darkness and indisposition to acknowledge spiritual truths, on the will and affections a violent bent and propensity to evil; our blessed Lord, who was manifested in the flesh to destroy or undo this work of the devil on our nature, has promised to all who with a sincere faith embrace his gospel, and are partakers of the seals of that holy covenant, that he will by the powerful assistances, of his Holy Spirit raise them up to a capacity of discerning his saving truth, enable them to mortify every corrupt affection, and to attain such measures of holiness and virtue, as he will accept and reward. Now the change is so great, in this restoration of the man from a state of spiritual darkness to a capacity of perceiving divine truth, from a life of sense and passion to the love of holiness and purity, and a submission of all his appetites to the will of God, that the most exalted figures of speech have been chosen by the Holy Ghost to represent it to our conceptions and gratitude: it is like a new creation, a second birth, a being raised again from the dead. And agreeably it has hence ordinarily obtained in common language; when a man is reformed from a course of vice and irreligion, to a life of virtue and piety, to say he is become a *new man*, or a *new creature*. From these sublime images we truly collect the greatness of the work wrought in us, and the necessity of the divine concurrence to the production of it: we could no more effect this change by our own unassisted activity, than we could create ourselves, or rise again to life after we were dead.

But the analogy in these, as in other figurative expressions, will not hold in all circumstances, and may be carried too far in application. Thus in the present case, when from these similitudes it is inferred that man, in the work of his regeneration or conversion, is as purely passive as he is in the instances alluded to, the resemblance is manifestly overstrained, and carries to a doctrine which (as I have observed) can neither be reconciled to reason, sense, or the plain declarations of other scriptures. We acknowledge it then to be implied in these expressions, that in the regeneration or conversion of a man, the greatest moral change is wrought in him; that the influences of the Holy Spirit are a cause, without which this change could not be effected, and therefore it ought principally to be ascribed to him. It is he points out to him the way of life, enlivens his affections towards it, strengthens his weaknesses, restores his lapses, and enables him to walk and persevere in it. Take away this assistance, and he relapses into a state of darkness and corruption. But then we say that he co-operates with grace, and by the strength he receives from this assistance, is enabled to will and to do according to God's good pleasure.

The manner, indeed, the special acts and impressions by which the divine Spirit introduces this change, and how far human liberty co-operates with it, are subjects beyond our reach and comprehension, and not discovered to us by revelation. Our Lord compares this work of the Spirit to the wind: we hear the sound thereof, and perceive its effects, and are equally assured they proceed from it, whether we can explain the physical process of the operation or not. In like manner, the change wrought in a man by conversion is manifest and certain, and revelation assures us it is wrought by the Spirit of God; but how, we cannot tell. We acknowledge the effect, though we cannot explain the operation of the cause. At the same time we are assured (as I have said) by sense, by reason, by the attributes of God, and by the whole tenor of scripture, that it is not by an irresistible operation; that we are not merely passive in this work

of grace; that God addresses us as rational creatures, and requires a voluntary application of our faculties to his service.

The original powers of our nature still remain with us, though grievously weakened and impaired by the fall. A thirst after truth, and a desire of good, are principles which still act with a great and universal force. The understanding, indeed, is dim, and cannot by its natural light discover spiritual truths; and the corruption of our will and affections renders them tasteless and insipid to us. The defect of light God supplies by a distinct proposal of these truths in the gospel: his grace strengthens our faculties to a capacity of discerning them, and removes the defect of inclination by taking off our natural deadness and disaffection towards them. The proposal of these truths is wholly from God; and we conclude from his goodness, and justice, and his veracity in the professions of his word, that all to whom they are proposed are by his grace sufficiently moved to attend and assent to them: sufficiently, I say, but not irresistibly; for if all were irresistibly moved, all would embrace them; and if none were sufficiently moved, none would embrace them; and if they only could embrace them who are irresistibly moved, then they who are not so moved, could be guilty of no crime in rejecting them. But when God has by a sufficient measure of grace supplied the natural corruption of our faculties, he then leaves us to act freely in embracing or rejecting the truths he proposes to us.

So likewise God in the gospel points out to us our proper good, and directs to the means by which we may attain it. He sets before us life and death, and represents to us the motives which ought to engage us to make a wise choice, and assists us with a measure of grace sufficient to overbalance the corrupt propensity of the will and affections to evil: but then he leaves us to choose with the liberty of reasonable beings; they who comply with his grace, comply with it freely; and they who reject it, do also freely reject it.

Thus, then, I understand the new creation asserted in my text. God by his

grace supplies those inabilities and aversions from spiritual truth and spiritual good, which our faculties had contracted by the fall: this is a great change, a great restoration of our nature: neither can any expressions give us too high conceptions of the power, mercy, and goodness of our Creator and Redeemer in effecting this for us. But then this implies no new creation, no production of any faculties in us, but only a restoration of the decays, a removal of obstructions from those with which we were created. Thus restored by the grace of God through Christ, he leaves us to act freely, without any irresistible force upon our wills: he proposes to us our duty, with the strongest inducements to comply with it, that can be offered to reasonable nature; and if we miscarry under these advantages, the fault is wholly in ourselves.

As the exposition I have given of this scripture, makes a full acknowledgment of the power of God, and the necessity of his concurrence to our regeneration and conversion; so it is agreeable to the attributes of the divine nature, to the necessary import of other scriptures, and to the clear and evident perceptions of every man, who observes what passes in his own mind, and therefore it may safely be admitted by us. And since the sense I oppose is attended with such gross irreconcilable absurdities, I presume I need not offer any thing farther in support of one, or in disproof of the other. I proceed then,

III. To observe what sentiments and duties this scripture in its true import ought to suggest to us.

The first sentiment that arises hence is, a conviction of the deplorable state of nature to which sin had reduced us; a weak, ignorant creature, alien from God and goodness, and a prey to the great destroyer. In man naturally dwelleth no good thing, but the imaginations of his heart are only evil continually. But then we are here taught, and with humble gratitude are bound to acknowledge, whence our strength and our redemption come: that it is God, who by his grace purchased for us by Christ, and communicated to us by his Spirit, lightens

our darkness, out of weakness makes us strong, able to contend with those enemies who war against the soul, and subdue the reluctances of our own corruption. Let him therefore who glories, glory in the Lord. To him let us ascribe the merit and praise of all our services; and with humble supplication entreat this necessary assistance, that, by his renewing, preventing, and supporting grace, he would lead us from strength to strength, till we come unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of fulness in Christ. But then it is to be remembered,

Secondly, That thus renewed, thus assisted, God demands a voluntary service from us: without this inspired strength, indeed, we could do nothing, but by it we are raised to a capacity of turning to God, and performing such an obedience as he requires. We are restored to the liberty of reasonable beings, and may either quench the Spirit, resist his grace, and harden our hearts against his impressions; or we may attend to his holy motions, follow the trace of light he opens to us, and pursue the paths of duty and happiness to which he invites us. Our ability is from God, but the neglect of improving that ability to its proper ends is from ourselves, and the fatal consequences that will attend that neglect, the result of our own choice. God has done all for us that the tenderest father could do for his children, the most indulgent creator for the work of his hands. Through the mediation of Christ he pardons our original apostacy, supplies by grace the defects of our corruption, and puts it in our power to choose and obtain eternal salvation: more than this neither will infinite goodness require, nor infinite justice permit to be done for us. It is our part and duty to co-operate with this grace, vigorously to exert those powers, and act up to those advantages to which it restores us. He has given eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: he shews us the way of life, and persuades and encourages us to walk in it, and promises to accompany us through all the stages of our passage, with supports equal to the difficulties that may attend

us. If we are not wanting to ourselves, if we diligently use and improve the abilities he has given us, and is ready at all times to afford us, it is in our power to run the race that is set before us, and so to run as to obtain. But if we will sit down sullen and inactive, in expectation that God should do all, and irresistibly carry us to our journey's end, we shall find ourselves miserably deceived in the event. Grace is not intended to excuse our labour, but to qualify us for it, and consequently to oblige us to it. And agreeably the apostle observes to the Philippians, that God's working in them *both to will and to do* (Phil. ii. 13.), was so far from excusing their own applications, or encouraging them to presume on their security, that he assigns it as the very reason for which they ought to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. His grace is a talent committed to us, and if we neglect to employ it in use and action, it will not only be taken from us, but the abused favour will be imputed, and increase our damnation.

Upon the whole, God has, through the mediation of Christ, and by the operation of his Spirit, made us, in a moral sense, new creatures; strengthened the infirmities, and repaired the ruins of our nature; opened to us the gate of life, and enabled us, if we strive, to enter in: a mercy to be acknowledged by us in the most devout returns of praise and adoration. But unless we strive, this grace will profit us nothing, this strength will be given us in vain, we shall not enter in. It is a presumption of equal danger to our happiness, to imagine we can do all, and to imagine we need do nothing for the attainment of it. The medium between these extremes is the true Christian doctrine. Of ourselves, as of ourselves, we could do nothing; but we can do all things through Christ strengthening us.

Let us then give continual thanks unto him for the love wherewith he hath loved us; praying always with all supplication, that being strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, we may work together with him, and make our calling and election sure.

SERMON LXIV.

By JEREMIAH SEED, M.A.

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Domestic Love and Union recommended and enforced.

[Preached in Twickenham chapel, 1741.]

PROVERBS, XV. 17.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.

It is hard to form a true estimate of any man's happiness; because happiness depends most upon those things which lie most out of sight. Those joys, like those sorrows, are most real, deep, and strong, which run on in a silent stream without making any noise; such are the joys, which arise from easy reflections, moderate desires, and calm content.

We see the false glare of greatness, which surrounds some men, and are apt to gaze at it with a foolish face of wonder; but we see not those miseries, which sometimes lurk beneath these pompous appearances.

What avails all the pomp and parade of life, which appears abroad, if, when we shift the gaudy flattering scene, the man is unhappy, where happiness must begin, at home? Whatever ingredients of bliss Providence may have poured into his cup, domestic misfortunes will render the whole composition distasteful. Fortune and happiness are two very distinct ideas: however some, who have a false idea of life, and a wrongness of thinking, may confound them. For

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. That is, it is better to have peace without plenty, than plenty without peace: that, where there is but a slender subsistence, yet an uninterrupted interchange of mutual endearments, among those of the same family, imparts a more solid satisfaction, than to fare sumptuously every day, or to live in great and pompous buildings, great and noble

apartments, every thing great, but perhaps the owners themselves.

Those that are curious observers of mankind, love to consider them in the most familiar lights. When men are abroad they choose to appear (whatever they really are) to the best advantage: but at home, their minds as well as their persons are in a perfect undress and dishabille. The world is the great theatre on which they act a part; but behind the scenes, they may be seen in their proper persons without any studied appearances. Our domestic behaviour is therefore the main test of our virtue and good nature.

In public we may carry a fair outside; our *love* may be not *without dissimulation*, nor our hatred without disguise: but at home, nature left to itself shews its true and genuine face, with an unreserved openness; and all the soul stands forth to view, without any veil thrown over it. There we see men in all the little and minute circumstances of life; which however they may be overlooked by common observers, yet give a man of discernment a truer opening into a man's real character, than the more glaring and important transactions of it: because, as to these, they are more upon their guard; they act with more of caution and of art, than of plain simple nature. In short, our good will or ill breeding is chiefly seen abroad, our good or ill nature at home.

It were to be wished that we had more family-pieces preserved and transmitted down to us. The good public magistrate is an example of use to few only; but the prudent and affectionate father of a family is of a more general and extensive influence. For my part, I more admire Cornelius the centurion for that short sketch of his character in the Acts of the Apostles, viz. that he was a *devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*; than if he had been represented as the most victorious general, that had enlarged the bounds of the Roman empire: for we learn from it this useful lesson, that the influence of a pious example, like the precious ointment from Aaron's head, descends downwards from the head of the family, diffuses itself over the main body, till it

reaches the very skirts, the lowest members of it.

Our blessed Saviour had indeed no family to take care of; the whole world was his family; and all mankind, that heard and kept his sayings, were his *mother, and brethren, and sisters*. Yet some of his last thoughts were employed upon a subject, that will be sometimes rising uppermost in the minds of tender-hearted persons in their last moments, viz. "What will become of my poor defenceless relations? Who will keep them unspotted from the contagion, and preserve them unhurt from the injuries of this world, after I am departed out of it?" At the very instant that he expressed an unexampled love to mankind in general by dying for them; yet he exemplified a particular tenderness to his nearest relation. *When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved, standing by, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother (whom you are henceforth to treat and honour as your mother). And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

The pains that he sustained, the generous concern that he felt for the world, could not swallow up all his regards of a more private nature. As a man, he felt the sensibility of a son, and the soft and tender workings of nature within him; as a great and a good man, he restrained them within proper bounds, nor suffered them, at that great crisis, to break out into any inordinate agitations of grief. He shewed us, that those affections which nature has implanted, may be innocently cherished, till we are about to pay the last debt to nature; and even then exert themselves, provided they do not wound the peace of the mind, and shock the soul in her last moments, when she should be as much as possible rid of all the incumbrances of this world, to take her journey, with more ease and freedom, to another.

These examples, as well as my text, point out the reasonableness and advantages of domestic love and union, which shall be the first head of my discourse.

II. I shall lay down some rules to prevent disunion.

First, then, I am to shew the reasonableness and advantages of domestic union.

Quietness under one's own roof, and quietness in our own conscience, are two substantial blessings, which whoever barters for shew and pomp, will find himself a loser by the exchange. Abroad, we must more or less find tribulation; yet, as long as our home is a secure and peaceful retreat from all the disappointments and cares which we meet with in that great scene of vexation the world, we may still be tolerably happy: but if that which should be our main sanctuary from uneasiness, becomes our principal disquietude, how great must our uneasiness be! There cannot be a greater curse, than to have those of one's own household one's greatest foes; when we neither can live happily with them, nor must think of living apart from them. It was wisely ordained by nature, that whereas, if our benevolence should be equally strong to all mankind alike, it would be lost in a multiplicity of objects, and distracted in its choice; therefore our benevolence should be the strongest, where there were the closest ties of relation. Our benevolence is like attraction, "which increases as the distances diminish; and then operates most powerfully, when bodies make the nearest approaches to one another." It is the voice of nature, which calls within us, and reason seconds that call, when all other circumstances are equal, to love our near relations better than our neighbours, and our neighbours than mere strangers.

We then counteract the design of nature, and consequently of the Author of nature, when we do not endeavour to contribute as much as in us lies to their ease and happiness, with which our own is often essentially interwoven. "Is it not strange," (says an ingenious writer,) "that some should be so delicate as not to bear a disagreeable picture in the house, and yet force every face they see about them, to wear a gloom of uneasiness and discontent?" Yet this is no uncommon character. Nay, there shall often be a certain shyness, coldness, and sullenness, in families, where there is no material ground of domestic animosities: and these differences shall be often the most lasting. For when anger or uneasiness immediately vents itself in words, the

malignity of the passion is soon discharged; then it is most fatal and pernicious, when the wound rankles and festers within, when the mind preys upon itself, without disclosing the subject of its grievances.

The affronts, that are put upon us by strangers make but feeble and languid impressions in comparison: but those that proceed from persons endeared to us by the closest relation of blood and kindred, wound us in the most tender and sensible part. There are two things, that affect the heart of every ingenuous man most deeply, viz. good-natured and generous offices from those to whom we have been injurious; and an ill-natured and unchristian treatment from those to whom we have been very kind and affectionate. As for the former, we can make a shift to bear their hatred, because we have deserved it: but we cannot bear their love; it quite confounds and overpowers us. And, as to the latter, it is certain, we can endure the utmost rancour and malice of others, much better than the least coldness and indifference from those whom we have made it our constant endeavour to please. Very beautiful in this light are the words of the Psalmist: *For it is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour; for then I could have borne it: neither was it mine adversary that did magnify himself against me; for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him. But it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend.*

Love is a tender plant, it must be kept alive by great delicacy, it must be fenced from all inclement blasts; or it will soon droop its head and die. Indeed, in general we ought to be very tender (we can scarce be too much so) as to what may affect another: otherwise we do we know not what. For no man can tell, unless he could feel for him, how much another may suffer by any unkind thing we say or do. An angry word shall give a deeper wound to some minds, than an injurious action shall to others, who are of matter too hard to make any impression at all upon them: and perhaps most men feel more in the whole of their life, from the scornful reproofs of the wealthy, the spitefulness of the proud, taunting sarcasms, and little instances of ill-will, neglect, and contempt, than they do from the more solid evils of life. These are the

little thorns and briars, which (though men of a rougher make may make their way through them without feeling much) extremely incommode persons of a more refined turn in their journey through life, and make their travelling irksome and unpleasant: though they do not distress them so much, as the deep waters, that threaten to swallow them up.

But the unkindly behaviour of bosom-friends and dearest relations gives the most exquisite sensations of distress; as, on the other hand, a grateful humane deportment from them gives the finest and most delicate touches of pleasure. Every trifling service, that is an evidence and expression of their love is received by us, as if it were a substantial obligation; and nothing can come from their hearts; but what proportionably affects ours.

To see a well-regulated family acting as if they were one body informed by one soul, where if *one member suffers, all the members suffer with it*; to see those who are embarked together in one bottom, whose interests are inseparably united, and therefore whose hearts ought to be so too, dearer to us than any other particular objects in this world, and only not dear as the good of the world in and our own happiness in the next; acting in concert, adopting each other's cares and making them their own, uniting their friendly beams, and jointly promoting the common happiness; is a beautiful scene, and amiable even in the sight of that Being, *who maketh men to be of one mind in a house*. *How joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* To have those who will receive us with an open-hearted cheerfulness, to whom we can discharge the fulness of the soul, to whom we can unburthen our cares; and by unburthening we lessen them (for sorrow, like a stream, grows weaker by being divided into several channels): to have those with whom we can share our joys (and joy like light by communicating grows greater, and burns brighter); this, this is a happiness, which a forlorn individual must be in a great measure a stranger to, who stands single in life, without any support to lean upon.

But the greatest advantage of a friendly behaviour to domestics is, that thereby we contract and cultivate that habit of benevolence, which is a necessary qualification

for everlasting happiness. We are apt to overlook and disregard our daily behaviour to one another in company, and the common occurrences of life, as little and trivial: whereas, though they are little in themselves, they are not so in their consequences: they are the very foundation upon which we must build an habit of benevolence. For an habit of benevolence must be contracted and kept alive, as all other habits are, by constant exercise. Now, our daily behaviour to our domestics gives us an occasion for an uninterrupted exercise of benevolence; and scarce any thing else does so. It is not then enough to say, or think, we will serve our friends and relations upon any material occasions; but, as for a constant complacency and obligingness in our common behaviour, to imagine we may be dispensed with from observing it. For these acts of solid and substantial kindness we are seldom empowered to do; they are extraordinary emergencies, which do not constantly occur; and a settled bent of good-will must be acquired, not by what is occasional, not by what seldom occurs, but by repeated and numerous acts, by a daily and uninterrupted discharge of the common offices of humanity; by saying a thousand obliging things, and by doing, if possible, more obliging things than we say. It is not in every body's power, because he has not a fortune answerable to it, to form a standing habit of charity by redressing the injured, relieving the distressed, and cherishing men of merit; but it is in every body's power to beget in himself this lovely disposition of mind, by studying to adjust his temper to theirs with whom he lives, by complying with their humours as far as he innocently can, by soothing their distresses, bearing with their infirmities, and by incommoding himself in some points to gratify others. On the contrary, the indulgence of an occasional fit of ill humour paves the way to an habitually bad temper. And to those who think it a small matter, Solon's answer is a very just one: "Yes, but custom is a great one." Did we seriously consider, that as often as we are exerting a spirit of needless contradiction, or venting an ill-natured wit to mortify those about us, we are cherishing a principle of ill-will, the very temper of the damned; it would, it is to be hoped, put some stop to this practice. But h

the misfortune lies : men are more ambitious to display the abilities of the head, than to cultivate the good qualities of the heart; though the latter are in every body's power; the former few have any title to.

The habitual sweetness of our temper, or the habitual badness of it, does not then depend so much upon the great and surprising reverses of fortune, when the scene is suddenly shifted from prosperity to adversity, or from adversity to prosperity; as upon our behaviour under little and minute accidents, which befall us every day.

It may be observed, that (generally speaking) men of a generous education have a more refined humanity, passions more softened and civilised, than those in very low life, where rudeness, ill-manners, and brutality too often prevail. Mankind in this respect (some think) resemble Nebuchadnezzar's image; the head whereof was of fine ductile gold, but the lower parts of stubborn clay and inflexible iron. This observation does not always hold true; there being often great humanity and good-nature among the common people, and great cruelty among those of higher rank. But, as far as there is any foundation for this remark, it consists in this, that the gentry are obliged by their character, as such, to shew affability and complaisance in their outward deportment; and these outward acts by degrees enter into, and refine, their very temper and frame of mind; and an obligingness in their whole behaviour, which is or ought to be their distinguishing characteristic, begets a corresponding sweetness of disposition within.

Be that as it will, did we often reflect, that to withhold from our domestics in the ordinary passages of life, and our daily intercourse with them, to withhold from them common civility, that debt, which we must be always owing, and always paying one another; is to withhold from them, what they have as much a right to, as they have to any property whatever; that every person, whether above us or below us, has as well-grounded a claim to good manners from the laws of reason and religion, as he has to his estate from the laws of the land; and did we act agreeably to such reflections, our minds would be prepared to humanity; the virtues of pa-

tience, long-suffering, mutual-forbearance, would be every day called into action, and ripen into habits; till at last we arrived at a thorough good temper. From hence we may learn, how little reason any have to complain, that they have it not in their power to do good. Whereas, if we would act agreeably to those relations, some of which we must bear to those about us, viz. those of parents, children, married persons, superiors, equals, inferiors, friends; there is not a day passes over our heads, but we might contribute something to lessen the uneasiness, or promote the happiness, of those with whom we have to do; and by studying to promote their happiness, we mould ourselves into those habits, which are productive of our own, both here and hereafter.

S E R M O N LXV.

The same Subject continued.

PROVERBS, XV. 17.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.

THAT is, a moderate subsistence, where love is among domestics, imparts a more unallayed satisfaction, than all the high and genteel enjoyments of life without that material ingredient of happiness. Sensual pleasures would be very flat and insipid, unless they were quickened by a mixture of social, friendly, and liberal pleasures, by the thoughts of imparting them to, and sharing them with, those whom we love and esteem. It is this that takes off or qualifies their grossness, and gives them their most endearing charm. One can scarce believe, that a rational man can love himself, without loving somebody besides himself. For he could find nothing in himself worth loving, if he were of that unloving and unlovely temper. He would despise that little thing the heart, if it were entirely ingrossed by self, without a capacity to harbour any other guest, however deserving; just as he would a poor narrow cottage which could barely accommodate its sorry owner, but wanted room to lodge and entertain a friend. He who feels within himself a dull indifference for all mankind, must, one would imagine, have a thorough disrelish of himself.

In a former discourse I thereforeshewed the reasonableness and great advantages of union, love, and a friendly behaviour among domestics. And in pursuance of this design,

I shall now proceed to suggest such considerations as may beget, preserve, and cultivate, such an union.

In the first place, do not delude yourself with any visionary notions of perfection. Consider men as they really are, with all their numerous imperfections; and not as you could fondly wish them to be. The philosophers have remarked what a joyless unsightly figure the material world would make, if it were divested of all its adventitious ornaments, of all its lights and colours, which are appearances only, and not the real properties of matter. I am apt to think the moral world would make as unlovely an appearance, if we could view it in a true light, stripped of all disguises, and men should appear naked and unveiled, just what they are, with all their imperfections, all their little sinister views, and their follies which they industriously cast in shades, exposed to public view. But God, who *knows whereof we are made*, and has ordered all things for the best, has wisely ordained, that our minds should not be transparent, nor our thoughts visible to one another, till we arrive at that place, where we shall have no paltry thoughts, no vain and senseless follies, nothing that need poorly skulk, and shun the light. The generality of men are like the generality of books, which we may often be obliged to have recourse to, and consult, upon particular occasions, but will not bear several views and reviews, and to be scanned over minutely by a critical eye: there are few men, as there are few books, whom the more we look into, the more we shall admire; the more we study them, the more graces and beauties, which escaped us before, we shall discover in them. Even those whom nature has shewn to the world as patterns of what it could produce, have yet some certain failings that reduce them, in some things, to the common level. If they have several excellencies to shew they are great men, they have several defects to shew they are but men. It is vain to imagine, we may meet with a person that shall please us in every thing: but this we may do, we may

find out something that will please us in every person. A man is not fit to live in the world, who does not see several things, without seeming to see them; who does not see through the little by-ends and selfish views which men may have; against which he must use all the reality of caution and distrust, with as little appearances of it as possible.

There are not many who can stand the test of a close inspection. Their virtues shine upon us at a distance: it is upon a nearer approach that we descry their failings. The distant ground, which is adorned with variety of flowers, seems to be all in flower, and to glow with one continued and unmixed lustre; but if we were upon the spot, we should discover several weeds interspersed amidst such a beautiful assemblage of colours. We may admire upon a slender acquaintance the saint, philosopher, and hero: it is upon a closer survey we always discover some tincture of the mere man to sully the brightness of these exalted characters. And familiarity, though it does not beget contempt, where there is true worth, yet always takes off admiration: admiration and wonder, always the property of raw unfurnished minds, unacquainted with, and unpractised in the world. Those who look into, and see through things, find nothing wonderful, but *One*; and that is he, who is *great, wonderful, and holy*: nothing is truly marvellous, but what he is, and what he doth. Nay the folies of men are often so strongly interwoven with their virtues, that we cannot gather up the tares, without rooting up at the same time the wheat.

Let us therefore, in the second place, learn to make proper allowances, and to represent their failings with all the softnings of humanity. Those that are continually complaining that things run cross, that the world is much worse than it should be, have very great reason to complain, that there is one individual person in it much worse than he should be; who cannot bear the accidents of life with tolerable patience, nor look upon mankind with common charity. Men are uneasy in themselves, and then shift the blame off from themselves upon the persons they converse with, and the times and places they live in.

Other men's follies and vices are always insupportable to those that are entirely devoted to their own. The fuller of imperfections any man is, the less able he is to bear with the imperfections of his fellow-creatures. True, regular, solid virtue, is *not easily provoked*; but when provoked, *easy to be intreated*, knows how to connive at little follies, and to pardon even considerable errors: whereas, false virtue is peevish, exceptionous, magisterial, hating to be put out of its own way; disconcerted with trifles, and unhinged by solid misfortunes.

Bear then with the faults of those about you, as you expect they should bear with yours; faults, which frail nature cannot well guard against, and which therefore good-nature should overlook; be just to their merits, charitable to their failings, and tender to their misfortunes. All other ornaments fade and decay, and sorrow or age makes *beauty consume away like as it were a moth fretting a garment*: there is one only unfading beauty, one undecaying ornament, which is infinitely more worthy than all the rest, and that is the *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*.

Which brings me to observe, thirdly,

There is a particular tenderness due to persons under any recent affliction, not only that we may not seem to *rejoice them, whom God hath wounded, and persecute them, whom he hath afflicted*; but because men are more susceptible of resentment, in proportion to the greatness of their distress. Men of a mind involved in melancholy, like objects of a dark and black colour, are more apt to take fire, than any other. Their distempered souls take umbrage sometimes, where none is given. All this we must bear with, and place to the account, not of their natural temper, but of their adversity, which imbitters their spirit, and discolours every object. Handle then gently a wounded mind, as you would do a wounded body, with all the tenderness you can; it will not bear too rough a hand. Remember, that a good-natured man cannot give pain, without feeling, in some measure, the pain which he gives. Nay, he cannot even see a person in pain, though he does not give it, without feeling, in some degree, what he sees. As the ancients held those places sacred, that were blasted with lightning;

we ought to pay a tender regard to those persons who are visited with affliction; their persons are in some measure sacred, they claim a kind of reverence from us, and are to be privileged from any ludicrous or inhuman deportment. The very sight of them should strike us with a thoughtfulness on the changes of fortune in general, and in us the private feeling of their own case in particular, which we would wish for, if in the same disadvantageous circumstances. A general civility is a debt to all mankind: but an extraordinary humanity and a peculiar delicacy of good breeding is owing to the distressed, that we may not add to their affliction by any seeming neglect. The scripture, which is very particular in recommending every instance of fine humanity, gives us to understand how we are to behave to the unfortunate, in the words of Job, chap. xvi. 4, 5. *I also could speak as you do; if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you: but I, instead of doing this if you were afflicted as I am, would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.*

In the fourth place, Be sure to observe and practise the rules of good manners. By good manners I do not mean an insignificant punctuality, and a frivolous exactness in the observation of little ceremonies. I mean something of an higher nature, I mean an assemblage of moral virtues expressed in our outward demeanour; a combination of discretion, circumspection, and civility, submission to our superiors, condescension to our inferiors, and affability to all; more especially a strict regard to decency in all our actions. For the rules of decency are the very outworks of respect, and when they are once broke through, the rest will soon be delivered up as an easy prey; and affection is oftener lost by little violations of the rules of decorum, than by any scandalous and enormous faults. The queen of Sheba, it is observed, was so amazed at the great decorum of Solomon's table, at the order and economy of his servants, the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, that *there was no more spirit left in her*.

If you have any talent for saying keen

and satirical things, be superior to the talent you possess, by shewing how little stress you lay upon it, when it comes in competition with your good-nature. Have no recourse to low stratagems, at once to cover, and yet discharge your little spite; which some do after the following manner: To attack men in public, without any provocation, for gross and palpable vices, is what they care not to do; because their good-nature would be called in question, and their company shunned: there is a more artful way at once to gratify their ill-nature, and to avoid the odious imputation of it; which is, to dwell upon the indiscretions and unguarded follies of those they are conversant with, or to play upon subjects that require a very delicate hand to touch them so as to give the party concerned no pain.

And yet these are the subjects which leave the most lasting sting behind. For such is the nature of men, they had rather be thought vicious, than ridiculous. They can bear you should hate them for their vices: they cannot endure you should ridicule them for their follies. For you do not place in the most insignificant light him, whom you do not look upon as beneath your hatred: then you must exasperate a man, when you scorn and make a jest of him, as thinking him not of consequence enough to be hated.

The province of ridicule is very narrow. Vice is the object of our hatred; natural folly of our pity; acquired or affected folly is the only object of ridicule: when not content with what we really are, we are ambitious of being thought what we are not, or aspire at what we cannot be. We should be out of humour with ourselves, if we thought ourselves insignificant, and of no consequence: and can it be wondered at, that we are out of humour with others, when they give us to understand by their behaviour, that we appear such to them?

Fifthly, Never make any reply to a person, till his passion abates, and the ferment subsides. For to what end should you expostulate with a man in a passion? That he may hear reason? But how can you expect he can hear reason, as long as his passion has got the better of his reason? How can you expect he should hear the voice of that charmer, whom anger

has made deaf to all its remonstrances? Wait but till reason resumes its empire; and then speak to him, in the softer seasons of address, if there be any necessity for it, if the affair be of such an importance as to require a fair hearing. Otherwise, it is a matter of discretion to drop it entirely, lest his passion should rekindle; for reason is often retained on the side of passion, and is set at work, in our cooler hours, to find out specious excuses for what we said or did in the heat and warmth of temper. And as you are not to reprimand any person during the emotion of his passion, so neither are you to do it during the emotion of your own. What the philosopher said about punishing, you may apply here, and say, "I will chide you, if I were not angry."

For you will be apt to carry things too far: or if you do not, yet what you say will have less weight, as it will be looked upon as the result of rage and fury, not the product of cool sedate reason.

Forearm yourself with this persuasion, and keep it present upon your mind: that whatever any occasional fit of the spleen suggests, is either wholly or in some measure wrong; that what is really bad, it seems doubly bad, and what is not bad, it represents so: that you no more see things as they are, in a settled melancholy gloom, than you do in a dazzling glare; that it is very hard and undistinguishing to be apt to discharge itself upon friend or foe indiscriminately. We then the least suspect ourselves or our cause to be wrong, when our passions are the warmest: and yet then we ought to suspect both the most. A probability, that we are in an error, arises in proportion to the violence of those passions which hinder us from discerning the truth. But an apprehension or distrust, that we are so, lessens in the same proportion. Nothing is more common, than to hear persons, who have very material things to say in their own behalf, injuring themselves and their cause by mixing trifles with them: the reason of which is, that, though they are trifles in themselves, and appear so to every indifferent person, yet the warmth of passion in the party concerned magnifies them into substantial injuries.

Sixthly, Guard against pride, *from*
(c)

which cometh contention. Persons of sense and virtue will seldom differ about things that are plainly essential to the happiness of the family: the greatest danger is, that they should disagree about trifles, where each will think they cannot give up the point without yielding the other the superiority: and the disagreement is often the sharpest where the difference is the smallest. Do not imagine that every person must exactly adjust their temper to yours in every point, so as to be your exact counterpart. If men recede in some particulars from their own inclinations to comply with those of others, there is some prospect that differences may be adjusted, and a good understanding kept up; like irregular stones that must have their unevennesses filed off, and their rough corners smoothed, before they can come together, and join to make a compact building, where there shall be harmony and symmetry of parts. There is but one Being, whose will we ought to submit to entirely and unreservedly; and his will is perfect unallayed reason, without the least mixture of caprice or humour. Vain is all strife for superiority, where the only strife should be, which should oblige each other the most; and the only power that should be lodged in any person, should be a greater power of doing good. Never strive to gain an absolute sway over any thing, but your own passions.

Be not ashamed to confess you have been in the wrong. It is but owning what you need not be ashamed of; that you now have more sense than you had before, to see your error, more humility to acknowledge it, and more grace to correct it.

We double the greatest part of our faults, by the excuses which we make use of to justify them: excuses, which are a kind of patches, when a rent is made; far more unseemly and misbecoming than the rent itself. It is a sign a man is generally in the right who has the ingenuity to own himself sometimes in the wrong; that he is one of those whose fund of reputation is so great, he is not afraid of impoverishing it, by taking or losing a little from it: whereas those whose stock of credit and esteem is very inconsiderable, care not to own any thing at the expence of it. Observe what sin most easily be-

sets you, whether it be moroseness, pride, passion, covetousness, &c. and place there the strongest guard, where your nature is weakest. Few persons have more than one predominant great vice: nature has guarded them very well in other respects; here they must take care to guard themselves. Particularly guard against any inequality of temper: for no man can have a true sweetness of temper without steadiness and a sedate way of thinking: they that seem to have it, have only, as one observes, a certain easiness, that quickly turns peevish and sour. Yet, when our affections begin to fall off, and cool gradually and insensibly towards any person, we are apt to imagine his are abating towards us. Just as the land seems to voyagers in a ship to be retiring from them when they are retiring from the land.

Seventhly, Take care to distinguish between a person's general standing sentiments of you, when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed; and his occasional sentiments, when some cross accident may have soured his temper. Consider what he is for a constancy towards you; and not what he may be now and then, when his spirits are ruffled and over-heated. Unkindly thoughts of us, which vent themselves in unfriendly expressions, may be only occasional visitants, which tarry but an hour; whereas tender and endearing ideas may be the constant inhabitants of his mind. You must reflect, that there is no such thing as maintaining a friendly intercourse without overlooking things of this nature. He who thinks he has discharged every duty without any failure in point of kindness and friendliness to his domestics, has forgotten one duty respecting himself, that of self-examination. For the least reflection upon himself will serve to shew, that he has sometimes said things that had been better left unsaid; that he has been out of humour, when there was not a sufficient reason for his being so; and has gone too far when there was. A wise and a good man will therefore make proper allowances, and think, that, as a generous enemy may sometimes, through a flush of good humour, say an handsome thing in our behalf, and deviate into praise; so a firm friend, through a surprise of ill-humour, may let fall a disobliging expression. And whereas an

hasty temper is immediately for proceeding to extremities, a prudent man goes more leisurely to work, and advises a friend; perhaps he has not said what has been reported; and if he have, that he speak it no more. And indeed, without such a procedure, all friendships would be precarious; they would lie at the mercy of those who were malicious enough to do us an ill office.

But above all, lastly, religion is absolutely necessary to preserve domestic union. For families are but little societies, as societies are larger families; and therefore religion, which is confessedly the best bond and cement of union in states and larger communities, is likewise so in little domestic governments: and family prayer is as much a duty in this smaller sphere of action, as public worship is a national concern. It is therefore incumbent upon those who preside over a family, to impress a sense of religion upon those who are beneath them: but to do that effectually they themselves must be first affected with a serious and hearty sense of it. Their domestics will every day be witnesses of their ill qualities, such as anger, impatience, &c. It were to be wished, therefore, that they would let their good qualities, if they have any, shine forth before them. It must be with very ill grace they can complain of the disobedience of servants to them, who let them see by their whole behaviour, that they are regardless of their great and common master, their *Master which is in heaven*. Why should they, whom much nobler motives have no influence upon, expect that the fear of offending them should restrain their dependents? People may complain of the badness of servants, the undutifulness of children, and the universal depravation of morals; but such complaints come better from any, than from those to whom that depravation is in a great measure owing by their carelessness and unguarded levity of temper, to say no worse; not having the prudence to keep their follies to themselves, but scattering the infection among their inferiors and attendants.

Be then seriously and solidly good yourself; and others, if they are susceptible of it, will learn goodness from you; and obey you more out of a principle of love

than fear. Revere yourself, if you would have your inferiors revere you:—revere yourself—by exemplifying such a steady and regular practice of every branch of virtue, as will command their inward homage, the homage of the mind; and then outward marks of respect will follow of course without reluctance or constraint. Every one will reverence and acknowledge that worth, of which you seem insensible; and acknowledge and reverence it the more, because you seem insensible of it. We insensibly slide into the manners of those with whom we daily converse and constantly live; we catch the flame of virtue from them, by being always near to them. For goodness does not only communicate favours and kindnesses, it even in some measure communicates itself. Just as those who have been long among the most fragrant objects, not only are delighted with the odour that breathes from them; some of the very fragranciness cleaves to, and remains with them; they become fragrant themselves, by staying long among objects that are so.

Carry then their minds upwards from yourself, who are the head of a small family, to him, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is called*. Consider that the joint prayers of a family are as necessary to derive a blessing upon, or avert a calamity from, a family, as public prayers are to deprecate the judgments, or conciliate the favour of the Deity to a nation. So may he, who *maketh men to be of one mind in an house*, preserve you from all the miseries that must fall upon a family embroiled, and a house divided against itself!

Thus, when you have tuned their minds and your own with religion, you will find that the union of souls was but begun here; it will be perfected above, where love and *charity never fail*. And death, which dissolves the union of soul and body, cannot dissolve the inviolable union of virtuous hearts joined together in pure unsullied friendship. Those who were lovely and loving in their lives, shall not be, even by their deaths, divided for ever. Separated for a while, they shall meet again, where there shall be no second separation, where they shall continue to be of one heart and of one mind.

SERMON LXVI.

'The Case of Diversions stated, and the Necessity of an early Application to Wisdom shewn.

[Preached before the University of Oxford,
March 2, 1739-40.]

PROVERBS, xviii. 1.

Through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with wisdom.

DULL and insipid is every performance, where inclination bears no part; but a strong desire to do our duty overcomes the difficulties that lie in the way to the doing of it, and the very *labour of love* is a pleasure. The heart will set every engine at work, when it is thoroughly engaged on the side of knowledge. No social diversion, no pleasure, will interrupt its pursuits; because then it will be its greatest pleasure to *seek and intermeddle with wisdom*.

A total separation, however, from society, and the pleasures thereof, cannot be the meaning of my author, because that is contrary to the main tenor of the book of Proverbs; and, besides, it is obvious to observe, that any one man's sense, however excellent, unless it mixes in society with that of others, always degenerates into singularity and caprice.

In the following discourse I shall therefore,

I. Attempt to shew how far social diversions are allowable.

II. Point out the necessity of an early and close application to wisdom.

III. Subjoin some reflections connected with the subject.

I. Then, I am to shew how far social diversions are allowable.

In the first place, when there is no reason against any social (or indeed any other) pleasure, there is always a reason for it, viz. that it is a pleasure; just as when there is no reason to undergo any pain, there is one always, why we should not, viz. that it is a pain. To suppose the Deity would abridge us of any plea-

sure merely as such, when it does not interfere with higher and nobler delights, is a notion highly derogatory to his goodness, who, in forming the world, seems, in some things, to have consulted our pleasure only, without any other apparent end in view.

Secondly, Diversions are necessary to deceive the cares, sweeten the toils, and smooth the ruggedness of life. Man is a strange compound of greatness and littleness. There is something so great in our frame, that we cannot be happy without such substantial pleasures as will stand the test of our severest reflections: and yet withal something so little in our composition, that we cannot do altogether without such innocent amusements as may take our minds off from their abstractions, and gently lead them into the more familiar traces of thought. And he who applies himself to his studies, or any other employment, with proper intervals of refreshment to recruit his spirits, will upon the whole do more good, as he bids fairer to prolong his life; than he, who, by too eager and uninterrupted an application, deadens his spirits, impairs his health, and wears out the very springs of life.

Further, diversions are necessary under any affliction. For the first step toward a recovery of happiness, is to steal ourselves gradually from a sense of our misery; and this is to be done, not by putting or keeping our thinking faculty upon the stretch, but by lulling our unquiet and too active thoughts to rest. And, let men say what they will, those hours which are wasted away in indulging an idle sullenness, or a moping melancholy, are no less placed to our account, than those which fly away unperceived in unthinking mirth and gaiety. It is the same thing, as to all religious intents and purposes, whether our time is misspent in vanity, or in anguish and vexation of spirit.

Thirdly, Diversions are requisite to endear us to one another. For it is a mistake to think, that the solid and material services we do one another are the only cements of social love and union; because we seldom have it in our power to do them; and, besides, they are expensive to the giver, and often uneasy to the receiver, who would not, perhaps, be obliged for

very liberal gifts, to any but him, who *giveth liberally and upbraideth not*. But to comply with men's tastes, as far as we innocently can, in the little incidents and daily occurrences of life, to bear a part in their favourite diversions, and to adjust our tempers to theirs; it is this that knits men's hearts to one another, and lays the foundation of friendships. On the contrary, the want of the little arts to render a man pleasing and agreeable, shall do him more disservice, than an hundred substantial and manly accomplishments can counterbalance or repair. And the reason is obvious. Few have perhaps understanding to discern, or candour to acknowledge, or generosity to reward, superior and solid merit: but the bulk of mankind can easily see, be affected with, and offended at, little singularities and non-compliances in a man's behaviour, which lie exactly level to their capacities. It is an easy matter for a person of superior sense to soar above the common sphere. His chief difficulty is to let himself down to the common level, without which all his great knowledge will be, in some measure, useless. It is a sign of an undistinguishing judgment to imagine, that every thing that is small, is also trivial: that is trivial, which is of no consequence: whereas small matters may be the foundation of great ones, and by our behaviour in them, we form the mind to good habits, as I have shewn in a former sermon, or contract habitually bad dispositions.

But this puts me in mind, fourthly, That diversions are requisite to enlarge the usefulness and influence of a good character.

The man, who, though generally intent on great matters, yet can occasionally condescend to little things, without making himself little, singular in nothing but goodness, and uncomplying in nothing but vice; the man, who is in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, takes the most effectual method of making us like unto him in virtue. Whereas a person, who looks upon all pleasantry as criminal, whatever other duties he may practise, forgets one of the most material of all, that of gaining over others to the interests of virtue, by making it appear to be, what it really is, a lovely form. It is true,

that, instead of paying an implicit obedience to custom, and blindly following a multitude to do evil; it is our duty to be humble enough to follow a good example, where it is, and yet brave enough to set one to ~~the~~ world, where it is not. But singularity in matters of no moment discredits a man's virtues, and disqualifies him from being useful in affairs of consequence. It is natural for persons to imitate those whom they love: it would be therefore worth the while for the good to endear, by little compliances, their persons to the affections of mankind, that they might recommend their actions to their imitation.

Our blessed Saviour was so far from giving religion a gloomy appearance, that the first miracle which he wrought was at a scene of festivity, where he *turned the water into wine*. And he, who gave and exemplified the strictest rules of life, gave a sanction to the innocent comforts and refreshments of it. His life was indeed the very beauty of holiness, a faultless form, finished, regular, and exact; yet softened by an easy sweetness and humility; an unaffected grace, without any forbidding mien, gave a powerful and endearing charm to it. When he was asked, *why his disciples fasted not?* his answer shews, that he was far from putting, at first, hard and rigorous duties upon raw and tender minds; the obvious meaning of *not putting new wine into old bottles*; a rule, which, if it had been observed by some well-meaning reformers among us, might have prevented that religious despair and frenzy, of which we have seen some shocking instances among their followers. Religious severities are certainly necessary in some degree, and under proper regulations; but an excess of them, as we must have observed in some late examples, however it may have blunted the edge of the sensual appetite, has set a much keener edge on the spirits, and embittered the temper. If it has mortified the deeds of the flesh, and damped the inclination to animal pleasures, it has produced far more incurable vices, viz. spiritual pride, rancour, and an uncharitableness, equal, at least, to that of the Papists. The same temper, which, in a continued high enjoyment of life, would discharge itself in sudden eruptions of

rage and fury, in too low and reduced a state of body, settles into a lasting peevishness, acrimony of spirit, and a splenetic disrelish of every thing in this world, which surely is not very consistent with an affectionate love to the Maker of it. A dissipation of thought may be sometimes as requisite for the overpensive and thoughtful, as a recollection of thought is for men of quite another turn. That retirement, that application to meditation and reading, which may be necessary to reduce the volatile and airy into a sober and composed way of thinking, might drive others of a melancholy cast of mind into despondency, or even despair; as the same diet, which would be very fit to reduce a pampered and over sanguine constitution, might be prejudicial to a thin, meagre, and consumptive person.

This caution, however, in general, is highly necessary; That we ought to guard most against that extreme to which human nature leans the most; which is, by no means, that of an over-strict application to wisdom. For we are rather apt to lessen, than enlarge, the bounds of our duty; and on the other hand to extend too far, than to shorten, the line of our liberty.

If it be asked, when we exceed the bounds of reason in pursuing our diversions? I answer, If, after having made a party in some entertainments, the soul can recal her wandering thoughts, and fix them, with the same life and energy, as is natural to us in other cases, upon any subject worthy of a rational creature; it is plain we have not gone too far. Under these regulations, we may be gay without folly, and virtuous without moroseness. But, if they leave behind them a disrelish for, and an indisposition to better things, if the thoughts of what we have seen, heard, or done, intrude into our minds, quite dissipate our attention, and demand an audience of the soul; we have acted contrary to the end of diversions, which is to unbend, and not to enfeeble, the vigour of the soul.

It is farther to be considered, that though certain amusements, the little playthings of life, may not seem entirely foreign to a more youthful age; they certainly trifle away this life with a very ill grace, who stand just upon the verge of

another: it shocks one almost as much as to see a man playing and dancing upon the brink of a precipice, from which he is every moment in imminent danger of falling:—that, though some men place their chief happiness in diversions, yet they are, in themselves, strong proofs of human misery: for, if we were happy in ourselves, there would be no occasion to divert our thoughts from ourselves. And which of the two is the most pitiable object; he who goes to other men's doors to beg his daily bread, or he who goes thither to beg his daily happiness, being too poor to furnish out his own entertainment? He, whose company is an insupportable burthen to himself, is very much obliged to the good-nature and easiness of his companions, that it is not an insupportable burthen to them too.

There is such a principle of activity in human nature (especially in youth), that there is no great danger we should fall into an habit of doing just nothing at all. The greatest hazard is, that we should contract an habit of doing nothing to the purpose, and of fooling away life in an impertinent course of diversions. An entire state of inaction is not to be dreaded; what we are to guard against is, that we do not fall into an easy insignificance of action, persevere in it, and then go out of the world with this melancholy reflection. That we have scarce done one action for which it was worth coming into it: our lives being like *a tale that is told*; a tale harmless, it may be, inoffensive, and far spun out, but very insipid, trifling, and unmeaning, containing no useful moral, or rational entertainment, scarce worth the minding, while the thread of it was carrying on, ending as poorly as it began, and forgotten almost as soon as over.

II. But this brings me to my second head, viz. the necessity of an early and close application to wisdom.

It is necessary to habituate our minds, in our younger years, to some employment, which may engage our thoughts, and fill the capacity of the soul at a riper age. For, however we may roam in youth, from folly to folly, too volatile for rest, too soft and effeminate for industry, ever ambitious to make a splendid figure, and to *shine before men*, but never endeavouring to *glorify our Father which is in*

heaven; yet the time will come, when we shall outgrow the relish of childish amusements. And, if we are not provided with a taste for manly satisfactions to succeed in their room, we must of course become miserable at an age more difficult to be pleased. While men, however unthinking and unemployed, enjoy an inexhaustible flow of vigorous spirits, a constant succession of gay ideas, which flutter and sport in the brain, makes them pleased with themselves and with every frolic as trifling as themselves: but, when the ferment of their blood abates, and the freshness of their youth, like the morning dew, passes away, their spirits flag for want of entertainments more satisfactory in themselves, and more suited to a manly age. And the soul, from a sprightly impertinence, from quick sensations, and florid desires, subsides into a dead calm, and sinks into a flat stupidity. The fire of a glowing imagination (the property of youth) may make folly look pleasing, and lend a beauty to objects which have none inherent in them: just as the sun-beams may paint a cloud, and diversify it with beautiful stains of light, however dark, unsubstantial, and empty in itself. But nothing can shine with undiminished lustre, but religion and knowledge, which are essentially and intrinsically bright. Take it therefore for granted, which you will find by experience, that nothing can be long entertaining, but what is in some measure beneficial; because nothing else will bear a calm and sedate review.

You may be fancied for a while, upon the account of good-nature, the inseparable attendant upon a flush of sanguine health, and a fulness of youthful spirits; but you will find, in process of time, that, among the wise and good, useless good-nature is the object of pity, ill-nature of hatred; but nature, beautified and improved by an assemblage of moral and intellectual endowments, is the only object of a solid and lasting esteem.

There is not a greater inlet to misery and vices of all kinds, than the not knowing how to pass our vacant hours. For what remains to be done, when the first part of their lives, who are not brought up to any manual employment, is slipped away without an acquired relish for reading, or taste for other rational satisfactions? That

they should pursue their pleasures. But, religion apart, common prudence will warn them to tie up the wheel, as they begin to go down the hill of life. Shall they then apply themselves to their studies? Alas! the seed-time of life is already past; the enterprising and spirited ardour of youth being over, without having been applied to those valuable purposes for which it was given, all ambition of excelling upon generous and laudable schemes quite stagnates. If they have not some poor expedient to deceive the time, or, to speak more properly, to deceive themselves, the length of a day will seem tedious to them, who perhaps have the unreasonableness to complain of the shortness of life in general. When the former part of our life has been nothing but vanity, the latter end of it can be nothing but vexation. In short, we must be miserable, without some employment to fix, or some amusement to dissipate, our thoughts: the latter we cannot command in all places, nor relish at all times; and therefore there is an absolute necessity for the former. We may pursue this or that new pleasure; we may be fond for a while of a new acquisition; but when the graces of novelty are worn off, and the briskness of our first desire is over, the transition is very quick and sudden, from an eager fondness to a cool indifference. Hence there is a restless agitation in our minds, still craving something new, still unsatisfied with it when possessed; till melancholy increases, as we advance in years, like shadows lengthened towards the close of day.

Hence it is, that men of this stamp are continually complaining, that the times are altered for the worse, because the sprightliness of their youth represented every thing in the most engaging light; and when men are in good humour with themselves, they are apt to be so with all around; the face of nature brightens up, and the sun shines with a more agreeable lustre: but when old age has cut them off from the enjoyment of false pleasures, and habitual vice has given them a distaste for the only true and lasting delights; when a retrospect of their past lives presents nothing to view but one wide tract of uncultivated ground; a soul distempered with spleen, remorse, and an insensibility of each rational satisfaction, darkens and dis-

colours every object; and the change is not in the times, but in them, who have been forsaken by those gratifications which they would not forsake.

How much otherwise is it with those who have laid up an inexhaustible fund of knowledge? When a man has been laying out that time in the pursuit of some great and important truth, which others waste in a circle of gay follies, he is conscious of having acted up to the dignity of his nature; and from that consciousness there results that serene complacency, which, though not so violent, is much preferable to the pleasures of the animal life. He can travel on from strength to strength: for, in literature, as in war, each new conquest which he gains empowers him to push his conquests still farther, and to enlarge the empire of reason. Thus he is ever in a progressive state, still making new acquisitions, still animated with hopes of future discoveries.

Some may allege, in bar to what I have said, and as an excuse for their indolence, the want of proper talents to make any progress in learning. To which I answer, that few stations require uncommon abilities to discharge them well: for the ordinary offices of life, that share of apprehension which falls to the bulk of mankind, provided we improve it, will serve well enough. Bright and sparkling parts are like diamonds, which may adorn the proprietor, but are not necessary for the good of the world: whereas common sense is like current coin: we have every day, in the ordinary occurrences of life, occasion for it; and if we would but call it into action, it would carry us much greater lengths than we seem to be aware of. Men may extol, as much as they please, fine, exalted, and superior sense; yet common sense, if attended with humility and industry, is the best guide to beneficial truth, and the best preservative against any fatal errors in knowledge, and notorious misconducts in life. For none are, in the nature of the thing, more liable to error, than those who have a distaste for plain sober sense and dry reasoning: which yet is the case of those, whose warm and elevated imagination, whose uncommon fire and vivacity makes them

in love with nothing but what is striking, marvellous, and dazzling. For great wits, like great beauties, look upon mere esteem as a flat insipid thing; nothing less than admiration will content them. To gain the good-will of mankind by being useful to them, is, in their opinion, a poor low grovelling aim; their ambition is to draw the eyes of the world upon them by dazzling and surprising them; a temper which draws them off from the love of truth, and consequently subjects them to gross mistakes. For they will not love truth as such, they will love it only when it happens to be surprising and uncommon, which few important truths are: the love of novelty will be the predominant passion; that of truth will only influence them when it does not interfere with it. Perhaps nothing sooner misleads men out of the road of truth, than to have the wild dancing light of a bright imagination playing before them. Perhaps they have too much life and spirit to have patience enough to go to the bottom of a subject, and trace up every argument, through a long tedious process, to its original. Perhaps they have that delicacy of make, which fits them for a swift and speedy race, but does not enable them to carry a great weight, or to go through any long journey. Whereas men of fewer ideas, who lay them in order, compare, and examine them, and go on, step by step, in a gradual chain of thinking, make up by industry and caution, what they want in quickness of apprehension. Be not discouraged, if you do not meet with success at first. Observe (for it lies within the compass of any man's observation), that he who has been long habituated to one kind of knowledge, is utterly at a loss in another to which he is unaccustomed, till, by repeated efforts, he finds a progressive opening of his faculties; and then he wonders how he could be so long in finding out a connection of ideas, which, to a practised understanding, is very obvious. But by neglecting to use your faculties, you will in time lose the very power of using them; according to that of our blessed Saviour, *from him that hath not any additional improvement, shall be taken away even that which he hath*, the original talent intrusted to him.

Others there are, who plead an exemption from study, because their fortune makes them independent of the world, and they need not be beholden to it for a maintenance. That is, because their situation in life exempts them from the necessity of spending their time in servile offices and hardships, therefore they may dispose of it just as they please: it is to imagine, because God has empowered them to single out the best means of employing their hours, viz. in reading, meditation, in the highest instances of piety and charity; therefore they may throw them away in a round of impertinency, vanity, and folly. The apostle's rule, that *if any man will not work, neither should he eat*, extends to the rich, as well as poor; only supposing, that there are different kinds of work assigned to each. The reason is the same in both cases, viz. that he who will do no good, ought not to receive or enjoy any. As we all are joint traders and partners in life, he forfeits his right to any share in the common stock of happiness, who does not endeavour to contribute his quota or allotted part to it; the public happiness being nothing, but the sum total of each individual's contribution to it. An easy fortune does not set men free from labour and industry in general; it only exempts them from some particular kinds of labour. It is not a blessing, as it gives them liberty to do nothing at all; but as it gives them liberty wisely to choose, and steadily to prosecute, the most ennobling exercises, and the most improving employments, the pursuit of truth, the practice of virtue, the service of that God, *who giveth them all things richly to enjoy*; in short, the doing and being every thing that is commendable, though nothing merely in order to be commended. That time, which others must employ in tilling the ground (which often deceives their expectation) with the sweat of their brow, they may lay out in cultivating the mind, a soil always grateful to the care of the tiller. The sum of what I would say is this: That, though you are not confined to any particular calling, yet you have a general one; which is to watch over your heart, and to improve your head; to make

yourself master of all those accomplishments, viz. an enlarged compass of thought, that flowing humanity and generosity, which are necessary to become a great fortune; and all of those perfections, viz. moderation, humility, and temperance, which are necessary to bear a small one patiently; but especially it is your duty to acquire a taste for those pleasures, which, after they are tasted, go off agreeably, and leave behind them a grateful and delightful flavour on the mind.

Happy that man, who, unembarrassed by vulgar cares, master of himself, his time and fortune, spends his time in making himself wiser; and his fortune in making others (and therefore himself) happier: who, as the will and understanding are the two ennobling faculties of the soul, thinks himself not complete, till his understanding be beautified with the valuable furniture of knowledge, as well as his will enriched with every virtue: who has furnished himself with all the advantages to relish solitude, and enliven conversation; when serious, not sullen; and when cheerful, not indiscreetly gay; his ambition not to be admired for a false glare of greatness, but to be beloved for the gentle and sober lustre of his wisdom and goodness. The greatest minister of state has not more business to do in a public capacity, than he, and indeed every man else, may find in the retired and still scenes of life. Even in his private walks, every thing that is visible convinceth him, there is present a Being invisible. Aided by natural philosophy, he reads plain legible traces of the Divinity in every thing he meets; he sees the Deity in every tree, as well as Moses did in the burning bush, though not in so glaring a manner: and when he sees him, he adores him with the tribute of a grateful heart.

III. I shall now, as I proposed, draw towards a conclusion, by subjoining some reflections which have a connection with the subject.

First, Let us set a just value upon, and make a due use of those advantages, which we of this place enjoy, who are here separated from the busy, but a firm seek and intermeddle with a practice

One considerable advantage is, that regular method of study, too much neglected in other places, which obtains here. Nothing is more common elsewhere, than for persons to plunge at once into the very depth of science, far beyond their own, without having learned the first rudiments : nothing more common than for some to pass themselves upon the world for great scholars, by the help of universal dictionaries, abridgments, and indexes ; by which means they gain an useless smattering in every branch of literature, just enough to enable them to talk fluently, or rather impertinently, upon most subjects ; but not to think justly and deeply upon any ; like those who have a general superficial acquaintance with almost every body ; to cultivate an intimate and entire friendship with one or two worthy persons, would be of more service to them. The true genuine way to make a substantial scholar, is what takes place here, viz. to begin with those general principles of reasoning upon which all science depends, and which give a light to every part of literature ; to make gradual advances a slow, but sure process ; to travel gently, with proper guides to direct us, through the most beautiful and fruitful regions of knowledge in general, before we fix ourselves in, and confine ourselves to, any particular province of it : it being the great secret of education, not to make a man a complete master of any branch of science, but to give his mind that freedom, openness, and extent, which shall empower him to master it, or indeed any other, whenever he shall turn the bent of his studies that way ; which is best done, by setting before him, in his earlier years, a GENERAL view of the whole intellectual world ; whereas an early and entire attachment to one particular calling narrows the abilities of the mind to that degree, that he can scarce think out of that track to which he is accustomed.

The next advantage I shall mention is, a direction in the choice of authors, upon the most material subjects. For it is perhaps a great truth, that learning might be reduced to a much narrower
if one were to read none but
ors ; meaning by original

authors, those who write chiefly from their own fund of sense, without treading servilely in the steps of others.

Here, too, a generous emulation quickens our endeavours, and the friend improves the scholar : the tediousness of the way to truth is insensibly beguiled by having fellow-travellers, who keep an even pace with us : each light dispenses a brighter flame, by mixing its social rays with those of others. Here we live sequestered from noise and hurry, far from the great scene of business, vanity, and idleness, our hours all our own. Here it is, as in the Athenian torch-race, where a series of men have successively transmitted from one to another the torch of knowledge ; and no sooner has one quitted it, but another equally able takes the lamp to dispense light to all within his sphere. But the greatest commendation of these seminaries is, that they have been constantly blackened by the enemies of religion and goodness. Those who have planted their batteries against the Christian religion, have always singled out the universities as the mark of their hostilities : which is virtually to confess, that they are the bulwarks of religion, and that they can never succeed in their audacious attempts, till they have brought them into discredit.

Others there may be, who censure them without just grounds. For it is a fault, to which men are very subject, to dislike what is confessedly good ; because their crude conceptions, never reduced to practice, may suggest something in their opinion better. But, in fact, where is there a better method of education to be found ? It is easy to form fine Utopian theories ; it is easy to govern and manage our own ideas, the world within ; for nothing is more pliant and obsequious, than our own ideas : but to govern the world without, far more stubborn and uncomplying than our ideas, and new model it to our schemes, this is the great difficulty. If they were to proceed from theory to fact, they would find several difficulties start up, which they were not aware of ; and that things upon experiment never fully answer the flattering notions which they may entertain in their imaginations.

Dismissing, therefore, these visionaries, let me proceed to tell you, that our hopes

are placed upon you ; that, whatever clamours may have been raised against you by men, who weakly or wickedly could find the innocent with the guilty, by a judgment directly contrary to *that* of the last day (for that severs the one from the other) ; yet we look upon you for so considerable a part, as the most corrupt part of the nation, in principles at least ; and, I think, in morals too. And may you long continue so ! for the universities have been justly called *the eyes of the nation* ; and if *the eyes* of the nation be evil, *the whole body* of it must be full of darkness, ignorance, and vice.

May none of us, therefore, dilly, complain, that the discipline of the place is too strict ; when all the world besides are complaining of the leniency of it. May we rather reflect, that there needs nothing else to make a man completely miserable, but to let him, in the most dangerous stage of life, carve out an happiness for himself, without any check upon the sallies of youth. Those to whom you have been over-indulgent, and perhaps could not have been otherwise, without proceeding to extremities, never to be used but in desperate cases ; those have been always the most liberal of their censures and invectives against you ; they put one in mind of Adonijah's rebellion against David his father : because *his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so ?* It is a certain sign men want restraints, when they are impatient under any ; too headstrong to be governed by authority, too weak to be conducted by reason.

It were to be wished, that they who claim greater indulgences would seriously reflect, that the glaring irregularities of two or three members bring an undistinguishing censure upon a whole body, make a noise in and alarm the world, as if all flesh here had corrupted their ways : whereas the sober modest worth of a much greater number, who here in private attend the duties of the wise and good, must, in the nature of the thing, escape the notice of the world. Notorious disorders, how few soever are concerned, strike upon the senses of some, and affect the passions of many more ; by which (their senses and passions) the

gross of mankind generally judge of things : but it requires some expence of reflection, to which the bulk of mankind will never put themselves, to consider, that great numbers must have spent their time profitably, formed habits of just thinking here, and laid in that stock of knowledge which they have produced into view, in a more public sphere : that those vices which they complain of may not be the native growth of the place ; but imported from irregular and undisciplined families, from schools, and from the worst of schools, the world at large, where youth are entered into it too soon.

Lastly, consider that it is a sure indication of good sense to be diffident of it. We then, and not till then, are growing wise, when we begin to discern how weak and unwise we are. An absolute perfection of understanding is impossible : he makes the nearest approaches to it, who has the sense to discern, and the humility to acknowledge, its imperfections. Modesty always sits gracefully upon youth : it covers a multitude of faults, and doubles the lustre of every virtue which it seems to hide ; the perfections of men being like those flowers which appear more beautiful when their leaves are a little contracted and folded up, than when they are full blown, and display themselves, without any reserve, to the view.

We are, some of us, very fond of knowledge, and apt to value ourselves upon any proficiency in the sciences ; one science, however, there is worth more than all the rest, and that is the science of living well ; which shall remain, when, *whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.* As to new notions, and new doctrines, of which this age is very fruitful, the time will come, when *we shall have no pleasure in them* ; nay, the time shall come, when they shall be exploded, and would have been forgotten, if they had not been preserved in those excellent books which contain a confutation of them ; like insects preserved for ages in amber, which otherwise would soon have returned to the common mass of things. But a firm belief of Christianity, and a practice

suitable to it, will support and invigorate the mind to the last, and most of all at last, at that important hour, which must decide our hopes and apprehensions: and the wisdom, which, like our Saviour, cometh from above, will through his merits bring us thither. And indeed all our other studies and pursuits, however different, ought to be subservient to, and centre in this grand point, the pursuit of eternal happiness, by being good in ourselves, and useful to the world. Soon, very soon, the disputer of this world may be no more: of this world, says St. Paul; for disputes will have no place in another. But the meek and humble Christian, who chiefly desired to understand that he might direct his will, and to know that he might act rightly, is a character which will stand us in stead for ever—when pride and self-confidence shall be no more. For we shall no more know in part.

SERMON LXVII.

By JEREMIAH SEED, M. A.

On Evil-speaking.

JAMES, iv. 11.

Speak not evil one of another, brethren.

It is a melancholy consideration, that conversation runs very low; that if any topic of religion is started, it brings us under the odious imputation of cant and hypocrisy; if any topic of useful learning, it lays us open to the censure of pedantry and ill-breeding; that if the thread of conversation be very fine, it is often immediately and abruptly broken off; but if it be of a coarser and more homely contexture, it is generally more durable and lasting. Strange! that a set of creatures, distinguished by reason and religion from brutes, allied to angels, and capable of holding an intercourse with God, should rarely utter one religious sentiment worthy of a reasonable being; while several have recourse to oaths and imprecations, to fill up the mighty void of sense, and to supply the vacancy of reason; making the sacred names of their Creator and Saviour, which ought to

suggest the most awful and august ideas, to be in their discourse, what they themselves are too often in the world, idle insignificant expletives.

But what falls under my present consideration, is the reigning vice of evil-speaking. I shall therefore shew,

I. The extent of the precept in my text,

II. The causes of evil-speaking;

III. The unreasonableness of it.

I. Then, I am to shew the extent of the precept in my text.

In the first place, This precept does not extend so far as to hinder us from telling another man his faults, with a view to his amendment: we may speak evil of a man, with a design to do good to him. *Thou shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy neighbour; thou shalt not suffer sin upon him.* But we are guilty of a breach of our duty, when we give our advice in a supercilious magisterial manner, rather to shew our own authority and superiority in wisdom, than to benefit the party concerned. We must consult the gentlest manner and softest seasons of address; our advice must not fall, like a violent storm, bearing down and making that to droop which it was meant to cherish and refresh; it must descend, as the dew upon the tender herb, or like melting flakes of snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind. If there are few who have the humility to receive advice as they ought, it is often because there are as few who have the discretion to convey it in a proper vehicle, and to qualify the harshness and bitterness of reproof, against which corrupt nature is apt to revolt, 'y an artful mixture of sweetening and agreeable ingredients. To probe the wound to the bottom with all the boldness and resolution of a good spiritual surgeon, and, yet with all the delicacy and tenderness of a friend, requires a very dexterous and masterly hand. An affable deportment, and a complacency of behaviour, will disarm the most obstinate; whereas if, instead of calmly pointing out their mistakes, we break out into unseemly sallies of passion, we cease to have any influence. So far then as men tell others of their faults with an intention to reform them,

and in a proper and becoming manner, so far they do not offend against the prohibition in my text.

Secondly, It is no crime to descant upon the faults of our neighbour, which are public and notorious. For where can be the harm for any man to talk of what every one knows?

Thirdly, Though nothing can justify ill-grounded uncharitable opinions, yet in cases where we have a sufficient information, a wide difference is to be made between what we say in a mixed company, and what we disclose to a particular friend, who is virtually under a covenant with us not to betray our private conversation; for we cannot forbear to communicate our whole soul, without any reserve, to him who is, as it were, a part of our soul. To be always upon our guard, is like being always in armour; it is cumbersome and uneasy; however we may wear it for our self-defence among enemies, or persons whom we do not know to be otherwise, yet among intimate friends one chooses to put it off, and to be free and disengaged.

Nor, fourthly, do we act contrary to the meaning of the text, when we are called upon by lawful authority to speak what we know against a criminal. For we are not obliged to bear no witness at all against our neighbour, we are only to bear no false witness. This rule extends to giving testimonials and characters of servants, or candidates for an employment. To give them no character at all, is to all intents and purposes the same as giving them a bad one; and to give them a good character upon the whole, when they do not deserve it, is to be easy and good-natured at the expence of truth and justice.

Fifthly, We are so far from acting against the precept of my text, that it is an act of charity, as well as justice, to strip the wolf of his sheep's clothing, which he has put on to make a prey of the innocent and unsuspecting. It is a matter of great consequence to the public, that the characters of wicked men sometimes should be universally known, as well as the characters of the virtuous. It is highly necessary those should be undeceived, who repose a confidence in

one that may bear a fair character, but is no better than a villain. Accordingly our Saviour, who exemplified an universal good-will to mankind in all his actions, yet takes off the specious gilding from those hypocrites, who *for a pretence made long prayers, that they might devour widows' houses*. He removed the thin veil of hypocrisy, and discovered those mean designs which lurked beneath their pretensions to an uncommon sanctity. Where a man's vices only hurt himself, and terminate in his own person, there we have no right to publish them, because we can answer no good end thereby; but where they affect, or may affect, others, it is our duty to warn as many as we think proper, a due regard being had to our own safety. Only let us take this caution along with us; before we endeavour to undeceive others, let us be sure we are not deceived ourselves. That rule which a celebrated philosopher laid down for the conduct of the understanding in judging of the truth of things, is as necessary for our conduct in judging aright of the characters of men, viz. always to suspend our judgment, till we have got clear, distinct, and decisive evidence. Never proceed upon any slender surmises, and precarious conjectures, the workmanship of the brain. Proportion your assent to the clearness of the proofs upon which it is built.

The sum of all is this: We may speak ill of a man, after we have gained a competent knowledge, and formed a right judgment, of his character,--provided we think it necessary to detect him; either because the public good requires it, or lest any particular person, whose good we have at heart, should be infected by his company, or over-reached by his cunning; but where, as one expresseth it, there are no reasons of conscience to make a good man speak out, there are always reasons of prudence to make a wise man hold his tongue.

There is one remark, which falls under this head, that must not be omitted, viz. That we are obliged, by a principle of self-defence, to set a mark of infamy on those who have injuriously branded the reputation of their neighbours. For he

who has injured one person either in his reputation or fortune, threatens every body.

And therefore common prudence will teach us to give such a man his just character, that he may not be able to make disadvantageous impressions upon the unwary and undesigning, by giving every man else a bad one.

If a man's vices are so flagrant, and his character so infamous, that there is no danger he should impose upon others; what are we to do in such a case? I do not say it is unlawful to speak evil of him; but the less we say of him, so much, I think, the better, unless it be our design to raise an indignation in ourselves or others against the like practices. To be often inveighing against his vices, however notorious, looks as if we took a complacency in dwelling on his faults. And it is not the property of *charity*, or of a charitable man, to *rejoice in iniquity*. *Let the dead bury their dead*: let those that are dead to all sentiments of virtue, delight to throw dirt upon men in the same state with themselves.

It may be asked, whether it be lawful to speak ill of the dead? and the answer is, that it either must be lawful in some cases, and under proper restrictions, or we must condemn all historians, (the sacred ones not excepted,) who have transmitted the faults as well as virtues of the dead to posterity. There is a tenderness due to the memories of those who are no longer in a capacity to speak for themselves; and therefore we ought to be very careful not to charge any crimes upon them, of which we have not strong authentic proofs, either from personal knowledge, or from persons of unsuspected veracity. Where there is even a faint probability, that the fact of which they are accused might be otherwise than it is represented, there we ought to be silent. But where the facts are so notorious, that they admit of no doubt, so flagrantly bad, that they need no aggravation, there we ought to consider, that there is a curse denounced upon the wicked, that their memories should rot: as there is a promise to the righteous, that they should be had in remembrance,

and their memories be embalmed. It is wrong likewise to speak evil of the dead, for the sake of evil-speaking, without a view to the information of the living.

Lastly, Though it is our duty not to speak ill of any man, without some of the reasons which I have mentioned, yet it does not follow that we ought to speak well of every body promiscuously, and in general; because we ought to make a distinction where there is a difference, we ought to pay the tribute of praise where praise is due, otherwise we rob the good of that fame which is a debt to merit only, by putting all mankind upon a level. He who commends every one, in effect commends no one at all. An undistinguishing praise confounds the characters of men, as well as an undistinguishing censure: just as overmuch light has the same effect as overmuch darkness; we see nothing as it really is. By throwing an undistinguished glare of praise on every object, we perceive no object at all in its just and genuine light. There has been so much prostitution of applause, that scarce any commendation is valuable but what comes from those who can discommend with impunity, and commend without an expectation of a reward.

II. Having thus stated the extent of this duty, I proceed to point out the causes of evil-speaking.

The first of which is an affectation of wit.

To do justice to a great and good character, requires an uncommon judgment, delicacy, and discernment. But nothing is more easy than to turn any person, however deserving, into ridicule: it is only to exchange one idea, which furnishes no matter for ridicule, for another near akin to it which does; that of seriousness, for instance, and a composed behaviour, for that of a stiff formality and solemnity; and then the work is done. The vulgar may be easily made to mistake the one for the other; and when they have once viewed a valuable person in a ridiculous light, they are scarce capable ever after of considering him in any other; the ludicrous representation recurs to their memory, as often as the person thus misrepresented.

offers himself to view. Thus what is only the sport of a wanton fancy, may be worse than death to an innocent man.

But whatever pleasure men of this turn may take in ridicule, it is better to be innocently dull, than to have all the wit in the world, and yet, by the misapplication of it, to make one worthy man one's foe. One humane and generous sentiment is of more worth, than all the merely ludicrous and witty thoughts that ever were. For one humane sentiment towards our fellow-creatures touches the heart, and diffuses a sedate and lasting complacency there: but thoughts merely witty and ludicrous only please the fancy for a while, and raise a blaze of mirth as short-lived as *the crackling of thorns*, to which Solomon compares it. An ill-natured man may be a prodigy of parts, he may have an uncommon brightness, but then it is, like that of a summer's sun, an intolerable brightness; to shun its scorching beams we retreat to the shade, and had rather bury ourselves in retirement, than endure his conversation. That wit is truly amiable, which gladdens and enlivens every thing, which shines with a lustre, gentle, but not faint, and powerful, but not glaring.

He who endeavours to oblige the company by his good-nature, never fails of being beloved; he who strives to entertain it by his good sense, never fails of being esteemed; but he who is continually aiming to be witty, generally miscarries of his aim: his aim and intention are to be admired, but it is his misfortune either to be despised or detested; to be despised for want of judgment, or detested for want of humanity. For we seldom admire the wit when we dislike the man. There are a great many to whom the world would be so charitable, as to allow them to have a tolerable share of common sense, if they did not set up for something more than common, something very uncommon, bright and witty. If we would trace the faults of conversation up to their original source, most of them might, I believe, be resolved into this; that men had rather appear shining than be agreeable in company: they are endeavouring to raise admiration, instead of gaining love and good-will; whereas the latter is

in every body's power, the former in that of very few.

The second cause is an hastiness or precipitancy in judging, before we know the whole of the case. Nothing is more common than to pronounce, with a decisive air, upon a man's whole character from a suspicious circumstance; and that too in cases where none but those who are intimate with him can have decisive evidence. Actions appear absurd, which are yet founded upon weighty and substantial reasons, known to the party concerned, but unknown to us. The motive he acts upon may be a secret confined to his own breast. Several have, I believe, incurred the imputation of covetousness, who really could not have expended more than they did, without being injurious to their families, and perhaps to their creditors.

A single circumstance slipped in, will envenom a whole relation; and there may be often a circumstance omitted which would give quite another turn to the whole. Incline always to the favourable side when things are doubtful. If you should be mistaken on the charitable side, God will overlook your mistake, and accept your charity. But if you mistake through uncharitableness,—all that I shall say is, may your hearers consider your invectives with judgment, and your Maker with mercy.

3. A third cause is malice. A good natured man will be far from thinking, that nothing can give life and spirit to conversation but scandal and raillery; he will take care that, after some hours spent in his company, none shall reflect upon any expression of his which shall dwell upon their minds with pain and uneasiness. Whereas unhappy tempers take a sullen satisfaction in blasting characters; and it must be owned, they have often a very unlucky turn that way; keen glances of censure proceeding generally from a dark involved temper, like flashes of lightning from a gloomy sky.

Or perhaps a malicious man shall go a more artful way to work. "Such a man," says he, "has several good qualities, and I cannot say but I have an esteem for him. But what a pity is it that he should act in so ridiculous a manner as

"he has done lately? I am heartily sorry for it; I know more than I will say; but I love not to dwell upon faults." Thus he shall express a world of sorrow for his neighbour's misconduct; when, after all this extraordinary concern, he shall not fail to set it out in the most aggravating circumstances: he shall express more than is true, and intimate more than he expresses: he shall introduce what he has to say against a man with a recital of some valuable qualities, on purpose to give himself an air of impartiality; and then shall usher in a character, which would not be received from a declared enemy, or an angry man. A malignant praise has been always the most successful vehicle to insinuate slander, as poison is never more artfully conveyed than in perfumes.

It must be observed, for the honour of human nature, that a much larger majority in towns and villages are the peaceful and inoffensive inhabitants: except in very large and populous places, there are not, generally speaking, above five or six troublesome intermeddling persons, enemies unto peace, and the pests of society. And yet these, by forging falsehoods, and grafting upon the truth several inflaming circumstances, by misrepresenting what is innocent, perverting what is good, and aggravating what is evil, shall disturb the peace of the whole neighbourhood, spread lies, and foment divisions. I do not know what pleasure men of this stamp may take, in supposing themselves to stand clear of those vices which they charge upon others. But this I dare venture to say, that the same mean-ness and littleness of soul, which makes them so inquisitive to know, so glad to hear, and so industrious to spread any fault of others, would make them commit the very same, provided they had the same temptations and complexion. For vice proceeds from nothing but the meanness and baseness of a depraved soul.

To this class of ill-natured persons those must be reduced, who love, as they express it, to speak their minds upon all occasions, privileged talkers; affronting those above them, insulting those beneath them, and displeasing every body. But if they will always speak freely what they think, they shall first take

care to think justly, as they ought, tenderly of others, humbly and soberly of themselves.

The most delicate pleasure is, to impart it to our fellow-creatures; complaisant, but never insipid; frank, but never rude and unguarded; general in our civility to all the company, and particular to each person by turns; when the discourse is directed to us, lending a favourable attention, and making pertinent replies; like a fine picture, which seems to fix an eye upon, and direct its views, to each person in the room, who looks upon it, and eyes it attentively. And if politeness (politeness I mean as to the main essentials) be an attention to say and do those things only which may send others away pleased with themselves and us, as far as it is consistent with reason and truth, then certainly politeness is a part of natural and revealed religion, the latter of which expressly commands us to be courteous; it is good-nature beautified and refined by art; good-nature, which, like the Author of nature, is not extreme to mark what is done amiss. Charity, the most lovely of virtues, represents others as lovely as possible. It does not merely let us see an object as it is; it is a kind of sunshine, which brightens what it lets us see. Whereas ill-nature passes over all the shining parts of a man's character, and dwells entirely on the dark side of it: as a painter of low rank shall throw those beauties into darkness and shade, which his eye cannot endure to behold, because his hand cannot reach them.

The fourth cause of evil-speaking is envy, or an uneasiness, arising from a reflection that the persons envied are our superiors in fortune, or other abilities. This prompts us to depreciate their worth, and to bring down their character to a level with ours, since we cannot advance ours to the same eminence. We cannot outstrip them by fair and direct means, and therefore we endeavour basely to supplant them.

Men of solid sense and virtue seldom envy others, or think themselves despised; because few or none are apt to think themselves slighted, except those that deserve to be so: they, on the other hand, have that genuine feeling that inward consciousness of goodness, that home-felt sa-

tisfaction, which the vain and conceited may pretend to, but never truly perceive. This makes them never out of humour with themselves; and when men are not out of humour with themselves, they see and represent others in the most lovely light. One need not envy any person, nor consequently detract from him. Let a person be our better, as he is called, provided he is not our better in, what is best of all, religion and virtue. The virtuous and the good are the only persons to be envied; if there were not a better way to be taken, which is to make ourselves as virtuous and good as they are, by doing all the good we can, and purposing more than we can do.

The fifth cause is, little personal animosities, just after a supposed or real injury, where there is no settled malice. And therefore it would be a good rule, that, before our passions are thoroughly cooled, we make a resolution to speak all the good we know of our adversary: but if we cannot do this, that then we resolve never to speak of him at all any further than our own self-defence obligeth us: because whatever good qualities we can allow him at that juncture, those, we may depend upon it, he has; but the ill qualities, with which we find a strong inclination to charge him, those, perhaps, he has not. For let your knowledge of mankind be never so great, yet you never can see persons or things in a true light, unless you view them coolly and dispassionately; the same sober and dispassionate temper, which qualifies a man for an inquiry into the truth of things, enable him likewise to form a just judgment of the characters of persons. Observe what your sentiments of the same person are, after he has done you some signal favour, and you will find this to be strictly true; you will find the judgment which you formed in the heat of your temper entirely reversed. Let this then be the fixed determination of your mind, to forbear all offensive words and actions till you are calm enough to examine the affair minutely and to give it a rehearing. Take it for granted, that whatever the ferment of passion suggests is either entirely, or at least in some measure, false. We all see through a glass darkly; but passion makes us see through

a glass falsely, which magnifies injuries beyond their due proportion. This we all acknowledge in our cooler hours, yet it is ten to one we most unaccountably forget it upon the next provocation. Such is our nature, and it is amazing that he who has studied it, and knows his own weaknesses, should be severe upon any body but himself.

The sixth cause of evil-speaking is an ill life in general. Those who know a great deal of ill of themselves, are apt to suspect ill of every body else. *Thou thoughtest wickedly, that I was such an one as thyself*, is the character which the Psalmist gives of an immoral person. They accuse people of wickedness which they do not know to be true; and censure them for what they cannot know to be true, viz. their intentions, and the thoughts of their hearts. They shall fancy, as Nero did, all to be inwardly as bad as themselves, though some are more artful to save appearances. Thus their talk is a constant satire upon others, and their actions a living satire upon themselves. Let them say what hard things they please, they can do much harder things than they say. Their foul language is nothing but the overflowings of a much fouler heart.

The seventh cause of evil-speaking is talkativeness. There are several who have neither a fund of sense enough to talk well, nor modesty enough to be silent. They must either act the part of mutes upon the stage of life, or they must have recourse to the standing topics of conversation, which are to defame public parties, or vilify particular men. It is beneath the worthy to go about as a tale-bearer among the people; that is the province of the worthless; mere leaden pipes: though the metal be dull, base, and ignoble, they serve to convey fresh streams of intelligence to every place: we apply gold, and the nobler metals, to other uses.

It must, however, be owned, that men who deserve well in other respects, shall be sometimes guilty of this fashionable vice; either because, though they have a general and standing conviction that evil speaking is a crime, yet they do not consider and attend to the malignity of it at that juncture, or because the common-

ness of the crime insensibly reconciles it to their thoughts; they see it practised every day, and that makes it familiar to them, and takes off every idea of horror. To obviate those ill effects which custom may have, let us consider,

III. The unreasonableness of evil-speaking.

For men are not more mistaken in any thing, than in the estimate they make of crimes. They seem to judge of them more from their uncommonness, than from the baneful consequences which attend them. Whatever crime is uncommon, is surprising, and consequently more shocking, than others perhaps of a deeper dye, which, because we see them committed every day, we therefore think very small or no crimes at all. They do not excite that striking disgust and aversion, which they would do, if more unusual and unfrequent. It is observable, that in fashions, opinions, and modes of dress, nothing seems absurd to which men have been accustomed from their infancy. It is the same in sins; nothing moves horror that is familiar to us. To rob a man of his good name, is not so shocking a vice as to rob him of a sum of money; yet he who does the latter, knows how much he has taken, and what restitution to make; but it is impossible for him who does the former to make an adequate judgment how much the injured person has suffered, and what reparation he ought to make; for he cannot tell what advantages the person might have received, if no disadvantageous impressions had been given of him.

Many value reputation more than life, which without reputation is but a burden. The tongue therefore that wounds that, may be a sharper sword than any other, which can only hurt the body. He whose *teeth are spears and arrows*, may pierce deeper to the heart, than if he, in a literal sense, employed those weapons against his adversary.

It is certain that, according to the common saying, so much reputation is so much power; and in proportion to men's credit, esteem, and character in the world, their weight, influence, and power to do themselves and others good, will be greater and more extensive. In some stations of life, to deprive a man of his good name,

is to deprive him of his livelihood, of his all in this world, as in matters of trade and commerce; and in all stations and callings, a great deal depends upon the character which we maintain; and whatever sullies the brightness of our reputation lessens our usefulness.

Let us consider, whether it would do the world or ourselves any harm, if that scandal, that precious knowledge, of which we are so communicative, should die with us. If it would not do any harm, then it is one of the first principles of morality, not to give others pain and uneasiness, not to wound them, either in mind or body, without a sufficient cause, without a design to compass some valuable end; and take it for granted, whatever pleasure you may feel in giving utterance to ill-natured suggestions, there is a much greater in stifling them. But if *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak*; if the fulness of your soul, impatient to asperse others upon every occasion, upon no occasion must have a vent, then you are certainly in the very *gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity*. On the contrary, what commendations does he deserve, who, at the same time that he has too much good sense to think well of the worthless, has too much charity to speak ill of them, when there is no necessity for it?

What, if a person, who in the main has led a good life, should yet, contrary to the general tenor of it, be guilty of some unaccountable weakness? What should we learn from this? Not certainly some poor materials for idle conversation, in which, whatever expence of words there may be, there is no expence at all of thought; no, it ought to teach us something far more useful and noble, a lesson of diffidence of ourselves, watchfulness, and circumspection, lest we, who *think we stand*, should also *fall*. The mis-carriages of a good man, which give an ill-natured pleasure to little minds, suggest to every great mind the most melancholy ideas of the weakness of human nature in general, but no spiteful and venomous reflections against his weakness in particular. Far from insulting over his fallen worth, he views his downfall with a generous pity and warned by it, *works out his own salvation with fear and trembling*.

As when the young, the blooming, and the vigorous, who bade fair for length of days, yet pine away, or are cut off by some sudden sickness, it teacheth us to be more temperate, and cautious, to preserve the health of the body; so when the good and virtuous, from whose former actions we might expect an uninterrupted course of piety, are overtaken, we scarce know how, in any notorious and flagrant vice, this should put us upon our guard, and make us take all due precautions to preserve the health of the soul. This is the use we are to make of these pitiable instances: they are no subjects for wanton merriment, pleasantry, and witty spleen; no, they are subjects for a serious consideration on our own frailty; they teach us not to be too sanguine, or over-secure. "Tell me, O my conscience, have I ever done, or shall I ever do, any thing like this?" Would to God we would talk and commune oftener with ourselves; we should the seldomer talk vainly about ourselves, and uncharitably about others.

Lastly, It is no unusual thing to hear some complaining, that their abilities to do good, and to abound in works of charity, are cramped within a narrow sphere, though their inclinations are very large and extensive. Now, if these men are in earnest, I will point out one kind of charity, which will not be expensive to themselves, and yet endear them to their fellow creatures. Their circumstances may not enable them to cherish merit by their generosity, and to relieve distress by their charity: but this charitable office is daily in their power, to cast in shades their neighbour's misconduct, and to set out in the most advantageous point of view their good qualities; to extenuate their failings, and to do justice to their virtues; to produce an obscure character into light, and to rescue an injured one from obloquy. *Silver and gold they may have little or none: but such as they have they may give*, viz. what is better than silver and gold, a good name and reputation to their neighbours.

I shall conclude with some advice to those who suffer in their reputation.

Let them consider, that "if the invectives against them are true, they ought rather to correct themselves, than make reprisals upon others; but if false, a con-

"tempt of them will destroy the belief of them, but a concern will argue the truth of them." Let them endeavour to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by well-doing. Let them make it their business to acquire a sufficient stock of merit; and great merit, like light, cannot be entirely concealed; though it is most amiable when it does not shew itself in too open and full a glare. The veil of modesty cannot long hide genuine worth, any more than the mask of hypocrisy can long cover our vices. He who is substantially good, will, in despite of all defamation, ere long appear so. The arrow may be drawn to the head, and levelled with a dexterous arm, but cannot reach a virtue which rises to an uncommon height. Let them, lastly, put their trust in that Being who will make their righteousness as clear as the light, and then just dealing as the noon-day.

S E R M O N LXVIII.

By JEREMIAH SEED, M.A.

On the Characters of those who pretend to Morality without Religion.

[Preached before the University of Oxford.]

COLOSSIANS, iii. 23.

Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

HAVING in a former discourse endeavoured, I. To ascertain the foundation of morality, and fix it on its proper basis, viz. a regard to the Deity, I now proceed.

II. To inquire into the characters and motives of those, who, though strangers to piety and devotion, yet pretend to be animated with the most exalted sentiments of benevolence, humanity, and probity.

It is no easy matter to understand upon what principles they can act who make pretensions to an exalted worth, but are unfortunately lost to all sentiments of piety. If they disbelieve a future state then to think, that they shall shortly be as if they never had been, that they must soon be swallowed up in annihilation, that bottomless gulph, where all distinctions are lost, as rivers in the ocean, is enough to pall each exalted and noble thought,

and to beget in them a sullenness, sourness, and discontent. A fruitfulness and impatience, that will grow upon them, will make them, so far from *fulfilling the law by bearing one another's burdens*, that they will be incapable of bearing their own. They must despise themselves and their fellow-creatures as a set of insignificant reptiles, that are to crawl for a while upon the face of the earth, and then to mix with the common mass of things. And as they who expect no other life ought to make the most of this, they must contract a narrow-spirited and illiberal cast of thought.

But if they believe a future state, how can they have any taste and relish for benevolence, and yet have no love for that Being, who has endowed morality and benevolence with an exceeding and eternal reward? On the other hand, what delightful perceptions must it give them to reflect, that at the same time that they are wishing, contriving, and promoting, the happiness of their fellow-creatures, they are fellow-workers with that great and good Being, who is able and willing to give them as great a happiness as their most unbounded good-will can wish, and far greater than their narrow understanding can conceive? How must their hearts burn within them, who have so fervent a zeal for charity, to find, that this *charity shall never fail*; that these short-lived instances of friendship and good-will, which we shew to one another here, will be succeeded by an uninterrupted intercourse of mutual endearments for ever and ever? And what will most heighten their humanity, will be, to consider that we shall all be partakers of the same common happiness from Him with whom is the *fulness of joy*, and from whom continual *rivers of pleasures* are ever streaming. It is then absurd to pretend a love for benevolence, and yet to be regardless of the most benevolent Being that is. And it is likewise absurd to pretend to love him, without a serious examination into his will, never dismissing what bears that venerable stamp, without a fair and impartial hearing of the evidences for the truth of it. For on whomsoever the world may bestow the title of moral men, yet an indifferent carelessness, and a wilful neglect to examine into his will and pleasure, is

no part of morality. Nay, his will, whose pleasure we must either do, or whose displeasure we must unavoidably suffer, ought to be the uppermost consideration of every man. Can he deserve the name of a good man, who does not shew the least regard to that Being, to whom he owes every thing; the Deity being the fountain-head even of those blessings which are conveyed to him by his fellow-creatures, as through so many channels?

But is it not, you will say, true in fact, that there are several of strict probity, generosity, and worth, without the least tincture of piety? To which I answer, several have from their infancy associated the ideas of happiness and esteem, of misery and disgrace. This makes them decline those actions which may entail infamy and disgrace upon them, and pursue those which may beget an esteem for them: esteem being to them an essential ingredient of happiness. They have been taught to set an high value upon themselves; which high value of themselves is always, more or less, accompanied by a suspicion or mistrust, that they over-value themselves. For which reason they are impatient to have the favourable verdict which they pass upon themselves seconded and confirmed by the approbation of others, and unwilling to do any thing that may lessen them in the opinion of their fellow-creatures. It is then the desire of fame, not the love of virtue, which is their incentive to good actions. And if we look abroad into the world, we find it thus in fact. Persons of this stamp will scorn to do a little thing, through the abhorrence of any thing that may make them cheap and contemptible in the eye of the world: but they will not scruple to commit a sin, upon which the fashionable world has stamped a credit, and given a sanction to. A person who is ungrateful, much more, ungrateful to his sovereign Benefactor, must be void of everything which is great, glorious, and beautiful, in the soul. He may indeed be actuated by the love of applause, by caprice, by the prevailing mode and fashion of the age in which he lives; but his mind is too narrow, contracted, and ungenerous, to be swayed by any fixed and determined principle of goodness.

He who in a public sphere seems to have the good of his country much at heart, superior to all interested views, in private life blasts the honour, wounds the peace, of a deserving family, and does that which he would think so unreasonable, as to warrant the keenest resentments, if he were the party injured. You wonder at this motley mixture in his character: but why should you expect a consistency of life and manners from him, who has no religious, and therefore no consistent, principle to act upon? The case is this: what he acts in a public sphere, he acts not as a duty incumbent on him, but as it falls in with his reigning passion, his fondness for popularity, and a desire to be thought of by others as highly as he thinks of himself. In private life, when the eye of the world is no more upon him, his selfish and sordid passions operate with their full force, and draw him off from that goodness which he never practised for substantial reasons: he hoped, that what he did in privacy would escape the public notice; but if it took air, the world, the higher part of the world, has dignified these vices with the specious name of gallantry, given a countenance to them, and by the commonness of them, lessened the popular odium against them.

I answer further, that there is a distinction to be made between a complexional benevolence and a rational humanity. The former depends upon a finer texture of the body, a brisker circulation of the blood; and flow of the animal spirits: and is rather an happiness than a virtue. And it is observable, that this benevolence decays in some people as they advance in years: those who were open to every social and humane pleasure, sometimes grow contracted in old age, and centre every thing in themselves; like rivers freezing in winter, that before dispensed plenty and fruitfulness all around. The truth of the matter is, it was only an occasional complacency, operating by fits and starts, not deeply rooted in the soul, but founded on the temper and mechanism of the body; and therefore ceased of course when that mechanism was altered.

The true, genuine, uniform benevolence, which will stand the test, must be seated in the soul, and founded upon rational principles: and the question is, whether

there can be such a rational benevolence, which is always the same, without any regard to that Being who is the *same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. Now, benevolence implies a disposition to part with some advantages which we enjoy, in order to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures. And in so doing, the man who is actuated by a principle of piety acts very rationally; what he *gives unto the poor, he lends unto the Lord, who will repay him again*. But he who foregoes his own enjoyments for the sake of another, without any prospect of a recompence, must love his neighbour better than himself, contrary to the dictates of cool unbiassed reason. Though therefore there may be a constitutional or natural generosity, without any love of, or regard for, the Deity; yet there can be no such thing as a rational, steady, and *manly* benevolence, without it. For worldly pleasure, honour, or convenience, can be his only rational aim, whose views are terminated by this world.

There is a fashion in virtues as well as in vices. Now, charity has the good luck to be in fashion at present; and it happens very fortunately, that an age and nation which abound in sin and vices of all kinds, should be distinguished by a virtue which covers a multitude of sins. There have been, I know, some who, without any appearances of piety, have expended large sums of money in works of charity. Now, not to examine whether this were owing to a kindly impulse of nature, or to the desire of popularity and applause, let it be observed, that whatever they do by their charity, they undo by the influences of a bad example. When persons in low life observe those who move in a higher orb shewing an open neglect of the Deity, they are too apt to copy after them; and then, having no fear of God before their eyes, give a loose to those vices which impoverish them, and plunge them into miseries of all kinds. And thus irreligious men of rank and figure introduce those very miseries by their influence, which they can only relieve in part by their benevolence. Nay, this very benevolence, a glaring popular virtue, makes their example more dangerous, than if they were consummately wicked: just as, according to the Mosaic law, a man that was leane-
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only in part, was more to be avoided than he whose body was entirely overspread with the leprosy. For a man desperately wicked raises in us an abhorrence, and is a kind of antidote to vice: but when good as well as bad ingredients enter into the composition of the same man, it is to be feared that his shining qualities, and especially so shining an one as humanity, will give a lustre to his vices, and recommend them to our imitation. All the good which he can do will not counterbalance the ill consequences of an example tending to give disadvantageous impressions of religion, and to discountenance that public and reverential awe of the Deity, which is the surest guard of virtue and the strongest restraint from vice. Imitation is confessedly a strong principle of action, and especially the imitation of the richer to the lower sort. Therefore he who is influenced by a consistent rational principle of benevolence will, for the same reason that he is benevolent, be, or at least appear to be, devout; which will be the greatest instance of his benevolence, as his good example may prevent those vices, and that distress, the consequence of those vices, which an abandoned profaneness and ungodliness never fail to produce.

Many of those who are void of religious principles make politeness, which should be only the ornament of their behaviour, the sole rule of their actions. Morality has nothing to do in the case, (whatever pretensions they may make to it) which teaches men not to polish over their behaviour, but to be intrinsically good; not to disguise their passions, but to get the better of them. The passion, for instance, of malice, is equally strong in some men of a refined education, as in those who have wanted that advantage; the only difference is, the former hate with a well-veiled malice and a courtly civility, whereas the hatred of the latter is more frank and undissembled; it discharges itself, which that of the former never does, in unseemly, scurrilous, and outrageous language. For the clothing of men's thoughts differs just as the clothing of their bodies does, according to their different ranks: the vulgar clothe their thoughts, just as they do their persons, in the most homely and disagreeable attire; whereas men of condition ex-~~pose~~ ^{clothe} theirs, which are often as cor-

rupt as those of the former, in a genteeler dress and more delicate apparel. Vice is the same in both: in the one it is an open sepulchre, foul, noisome, and unsightly; in the other, it is a sepulchre whited over and beautified; what is offensive is carefully removed out of sight, and nothing appears, whatever may be beneath, but what conveys genteel and polite ideas. This is all those persons mean, if they have any settled meaning, (as far as one can judge from their practice,) who have no regard for Christianity, but yet are advocates for the beauty of virtue. It is to practise some virtues, or rather to put on the appearance of some virtues, such as generosity, courage, &c. because they are becoming, genteel, and reputable, give them a considerable figure, and bespeak an elevation of mind answerable to their dignity: in the mean time, they leave others undone, such as humility, faith, meekness, and abstinence, though as much founded upon reason as any other virtues, merely because they have the misfortune to be unfashionable. They do not so much detest vice, properly speaking, as what is low, vulgar, and unbecoming in each vice, as I observed before in that of malice, and might give many more instances. Decency is the idol which engrosses all their homage, exclusive of true genuine inward virtue. And if that be the case, they may be said to do just as the heathens did, who sacrificed to the graces, but did not serve the God of heaven and earth. They do not abstain from sin as much, but ~~from~~ ^{commit} sin under such modifications as make it shocking and inconsistent with fine manners.

After all, I will not deny, that *the head of man is deceitful, who can know it!* It mistakes mere notions for realities, as some talk and write about chance, fortune, and necessity, as if they had an actual existence. It may, sometimes imagine, what is a mere notional beauty of virtue, viz. a beauty distinct from its advantages, to be something real and substantial. It may form a fine idea, and then fall in love with its own creation. For enthusiasm does not confine itself to religion, it extends itself to virtue and to every thing else. Our notions generally take a tincture from our temper. And men whose glowing and romantic imagi-

nation makes plain sense fat and tasteless to them, will disrelish such a morality as the Christian, who is founded on plain sober sense : they must image to themselves something rapturous and ecstatic ; and when they meet with no object of this kind in the nature of things, they strike out one for themselves by the heat of a prolific fancy. Rapt up into the airy regions of visions and chimeras, where they walk in a vain shew and please themselves in vain, they look down with disdain upon meaner mortals of a cooler turn, who follow unaffected virtue upon solid ground. Sanguine men are seldom content with things as they are : to take a liking to them, they must imagine beauties which they have not. And thus some may, for aught I know, have gone beyond the verge of cool reason, and worked themselves up into an enthusiastic ardour for virtue, by the help of I know not what visionary and disinterested charms, which they have supposed it to have, without any view to its real excellencies, the advantages it brings here and hereafter. The mystery of the affair lies here : they feel a warmth of soul, when they have been long contemplating the fair idea of virtue : now they imagine that it is the beauty of virtue, all lovely in itself, which warms them : and that that must be something real, not visionary, which can impart a real warmth, whereas there is nothing real but the ferment and glow of the imagination, which always takes fire by dwelling very long upon any object. Instances, however, of this lovely frenzy are very rare : the gross of our species are not susceptible of so fine an enthusiasm.

The generality of men, who pretend to morality independently of religion, except those in whom the original goodness of their nature gets the better of the badness of their principles, are such as have studied and practised the art of being easy and agreeable, without incommoding themselves, or denying themselves any pleasure within bounds. The difference between the vulgar and them consists in this, that the former, like marble in the block, retain a native ruggedness, whereas the latter have an equally impenetrable, but a more smooth and polished hardness of heart. Cheap favours, an insignifi-

cance of good-manners, and all the outside of benevolence, you may expect from them : but do not expect from them any solid and material services ; do not expect that any thing you can say should touch their hearts, or that they will do any thing which comes warm from thence. Their pretended benevolence is somewhat like the religion of the Pharisees, who were insipidly exact, and frivolously punctual, in little unconcerning niceties, such as *tithing mint, anise, and cummin*, but neglected the *weightier matters of the law, such as judgment, mercy, and truth* ; and to both may be applied our Saviour's saying, *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*. Benevolence, any further than it is constitutional, in most of those who disclaim all piety and devotion, is a fine sounding word, of which we hear a great deal in their conversation, but see little or nothing in their practice. Is there a man who, though a stranger to piety, yet, without being misled by caprice or ostentation, goes on in a regular, uniform, habitual practice of doing good ; who, raised above the common wants of life, feels the miseries of his fellow-creatures with almost as much sensibility as if he knew by experience what it was to want ; and relieves them with all the bounty of one who is not afraid to want himself ? Such a man would not be *far from the kingdom of heaven*. But I am afraid, such a character is, for the most part visionary and romantic. We run from one extreme to another ; and benevolence without piety, to which it is closely allied, is commonly as much mere pretence and hypocrisy, as piety without benevolence was during the time of the grand rebellion. Then men were for giving *glory to God*, without shewing *good-will to men*, or promoting *peace upon earth* : and, since that time, some have set up a principle of morality and good-will to man, exclusive of all devotion and homage to the Deity. Both are inseparably united ; and what God and reason have joined together, let not man put asunder. But folly, like matter, is continually shifting the scene, and subsisting under different modifications. It is the fate of some people to be governed by a set of words without any determinate meaning

annexed to them. *Seeking the Lord*, when men were ravaging the nation, was not more a cant term and mere jargon, than the agreeable soft sound of benevolence is, generally speaking, at present, without that which must be the basis of it, an affectionate love of God. A man may indeed do good occasionally without any principle, the very brutes doing several acts that are materially good; but to be habitually good, to be all of a piece, and consistent throughout, there must be a fixed principle of goodness woven into the soul. And he that will not do good to his fellow-creatures for the sake of God who created him, cannot, consistently with reason, be obliged to do it upon other motives. To lessen therefore our love of God, is to weaken our love of mankind. That God would place to his own account whatever was done for his sake to our distressed brethren, is a motive to do good as much superior to all others, as he himself is to all other beings.

An excellent Grecian historian, who lived before those principles of irreligion had gotten footing in Rome, to which he ascribes the ruin of his own country, has an observation very apposite to my present purpose. I shall beg leave to transcribe it, as I find it translated by a very eminent writer.

"See now the difference," (*i. e.* between a strict observance of religion and a disregard to it.) "In Greece, he that is 'intrusted with the publick money,' (to pass by other matters,) 'though it be but 'of a single talent, and though he gives a 'tenfold security, cannot be brought to 'discharge his engagements: while 'among the Romans the mere religion of 'an oath keeps those, who in the public 'administration, or in the foreign negotiations, have vast sums of money 'passing through their hand, from violating their honour and uprightness. 'And whereas in other places,' (where irreligion prevails), 'it is rare to find a 'man who keeps his hands clean; on 'the contrary, among the Romans, it 'is as rare to find any offending in this 'kind.'"

Thus far this writer, from whose country those very irreligious notions were soon after introduced into Rome,

which, in process of time, proved destructive to it too.

I shall close this discourse with the following remark, *viz.* That though a man should violate some, or even all, the social duties, yet as long as a regard to the Deity was not quite extinct in him, there would be still some hold to be taken, and some faint hopes of reclaiming him. The root of virtue (for *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*) is still in the ground; and it may yet put forth again, though several of the considerable branches have been maimed and lopped off, but when a reverential awe of his Maker is quite worn out and defaced, then indeed the *axe is laid unto the root of the tree*: the very foundation, upon which the hopes of amendment could be built, is destroyed: his recovery is desperate, and his ruin sealed: there is nothing left to curb him from vice, and bring him back again to the practice of virtue.

S E R M O N LXIX.

By JEREMIAH SEED, M. A.

Rector of Enham in Hampshire, and late Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford.

Religious Pleasures productive of the greatest Happiness.

Prov. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

THE turbulent passions, such as anger and revenge, are disagreeable to our nature, because they are open and declared enemies to our repose: they alarm the soul at their first insurrection, and afterwards command it with an overbearing tyranny. But pleasure steals upon us by insensible degrees, smooths its passage to the heart by a gentle and insinuating address, and softens and disarms the soul of all its strength. It is more therefore to be guarded against, as being more dangerous, and what we have a greater inclination to. To arm us then against the deceitfulness of unlawful sensual delights, I have chosen the words of Solomon, which set before us the genuine and sin-

cere pleasure which religion affords : *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*. In discoursing on which words I shall endeavour to shew,

I. First, That the pleasures of religion and virtue are superior to the pleasures of the animal life ; and,

II. Secondly, How necessarily those must be disappointed, who place their happiness in any thing exclusive of religion and virtue.

First then I am to shew, that the pleasures of religion and virtue are superior to the pleasures of the animal life.

And here we expect to be told by the men of pleasure, that spiritual satisfactions are nothing but the product of an overheated fancy, and mere enthusiasm. But we except against them as very incompetent judges. * A good man, by tasting the pleasures of sense, as far as they are consistent with reason, is very well qualified to form a true estimate of them. But the sensual man, by being an utter stranger to religion, is no more able to make a judgment of the satisfaction it yields, than a man of no taste is to pass a decisive verdict upon the elegancies of poetry, or an idiot upon a point of philosophy.

Dismissing him therefore as an improper judge, we appeal to the virtuous for the superiority of rational delights ; whether others are not for the most part either idle diversions to lull our unquiet thoughts to sleep, to sooth the mind into a forgetfulness of itself, and to make life pass away unperceived : or rather, whether they are not tumultuous joys, that put us in a ferment, and give the soul too sudden and violent emotions. Whereas virtuous pleasures produce a serene and lasting composure of mind ; they satisfy but never satiate. They flow not, like a torrent, with a short-lived noise and impetuosity ; but like a peaceful river in its own channel, strong without violence, and gentle without dullness.

But what am I going to prove—that he who strives to resemble God in holiness and purity, must have superior gratifications to him who makes himself like the beasts that perish ? A man that is sunk into brutality may indeed deny that

those delights must be the highest which are seated in the highest and noblest part of us, the soul : but all the world besides will own, that the joys which spring from a distempered appetite, and are accompanied with a feverishness of desire, are infinitely inferior to those of a well-regulated mind, and a *conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*.

We see in several instances, that men prefer their reputation before the gratification of a brutal appetite, when put in competition with each other ; and though free from conscience, they are yet slaves to fame. Now the pleasure of a good name is seated in the mind ; it comes not from sensation but reflection. They own then, that an intellectual good is preferable to the gross indulgences of the animal life. But if reputation, which is but the shadow of virtue, claims the ascendant and superiority over sensual enjoyments ; certainly virtue, which is the substance itself, ought to take place of them in the true and impartial estimate of things.

I would gladly persuade the voluptuary to try an experiment, and then tell me, when he has cherished the worthy, and relieved the distressed by some well-placed act of charity, whether the consciousness of having made an human heart to sing for joy, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon him, did not impart a more liberal, manly, and unalloyed complacency, than all the cheating blandishments and allurements of sense. The latter are the pleasures of the brute ; whereas the former are the pleasures of the man, shall I say ? rather of good angels, nay even of God, who, wanting nothing himself, supplies the wants of every other being. And what can more transport, what can more ennoble the soul, than to be so temperate, as to have as few wants as possible in ourselves ; and yet so charitable as to do as much good as possible to others ? A remarkable instance of this disinterested virtue, and the superior satisfaction that attends great and worthy actions, we have in the generous Scipio, who, in the bloom of youth, returned his fair captive, a masterpiece of beauty, to her future hus-

band and parents, whom conquest gave him an absolute right to, in the opinion of the heathen world.* When he refused a considerable sum of gold, which was offered by the parents; and when at last consenting to accept of it, at their repeated instances, he delivered it as a part of her dowry to her spouse; I desire to know, whether the commendations which his own heart gave him, seconded with the praises of an husband and parents, delivered from their jealous apprehensions, did not inspire him with a greater exultation of delight than the possession of an injured woman could have afforded. Their praises were the sincere tribute of grateful hearts, and flowed from the fullness of their souls; and nothing could be more acceptable to Scipio's ingenuous mind, except the consciousness of the beauty of his own action; whereas the thoughts of wounding the honour of a noble family, and the peace of aged parents, must have dashed his enjoyments, and rendered them distasteful. This delicate sentiment of Scipio was attended with much truer and more solid satisfaction than any sensual gratification could have been; it was the pleasure of reason, which will bear repeating in the mind, and improves upon reflection.

On the contrary, where the gross affections take place, they leave little room for virtue; they tarnish the lustre of the best actions, and make a man uneasy and dissatisfied with himself. For he that is good by halves, labours under a perpetual discord of life; he is agitated alternately by sentiments of unlawful pleasure and piety; and passeth his life in a perpetual round of following and condemning the same things. On the one hand, the remainders of virtue and conscience enter the sweets of vice; and, on the other hand, the practice of vice pall the relish of virtue and spiritual delights. He is neither brute enough to indulge his appetites without remorse, nor man enough to govern them. Hence he is at perpetual variance with himself, having just religion enough to make him uneasy, but not enough to make him happy.

A man that is divided between piety and sin, is like one that lives on the confines of two mighty contending states;

his breast is a constant seat of war; and he is sometimes under the dominion of virtue, and sometimes under the tyranny of vice; whereas a person of advanced piety, like one that lives in the inmost part of the country, enjoys a secure and unmolested situation of soul.

Thus does uneasiness haunt the man, that, like a person struck with the dead palsy, is part dead and part alive; and thus it will disquiet him, till his conscience becomes seared as it were with a hot iron, and he thinks there is no difference between good and evil; and to be persuaded of this, is as difficult as to believe there is no God.

But to take a right estimate of a man of pleasure, we should view him in the last stage of life. Good God! how contemptible does he appear to the world, and I dare say, even to himself, when he has no more that sprightliness and outward form which raised the admiration of the unthinking; nor that virtue and knowledge which is necessary to gain the esteem of the wise. When young (however inconsiderate and inconsiderable in himself) he might be fancied for a pert stupidity and a sprightly impertinence; some bright sentence in favour of infidelity, or piece of ridicule in contempt of religion, might meet with the applause of his ingenious acquaintance, who would be apt enough to stare upon him with a foolish face of praise. But the gaiety of youth being gone off, he must wear out the remainder of his days undistinguished and neglected; not daring to be alone; abhorring his own company; listless and uneasy at the present, he has no pleasure in reflecting upon what is past, nor in the prospect of any thing to come.

If he has an ample fortune, riches, it is true, may command an insipid complaisance; a formal homage and ceremonious professions of respect; and teach a servile world to speak a language foreign to their hearts. But where true merit is wanting, riches can never procure an affectionate esteem, an undissembled love, the tribute which virtue alone can either expect or deserve.

Hence it is that men of this stamp are continually complaining that the times are much altered for the worse; because the

sprightliness of their youth represented every thing in the most engaging light, and when people are pleased with themselves, they are apt to be so with all around them; the face of nature brightens up, and the sun shines with a more agreeable lustre? But when old age has cut them off from the enjoyments they so much delighted in, and habitual vice has given them a distaste of the only true pleasure, *whose leaf withers not*, and whose verdure remains in the winter of our days; no wonder, that a soul thus distempered, should view every object on its dark side: the change is not in the times, but in themselves, who have been forsaken by those gratifications, which they could not be prevailed with to forsake. How much otherwise is it with the virtuous, who have laid up an inexhaustible fund of pleasures against old age! the current of whose virtue still increasing as it runs along, becomes more strong and vigorous the nearer it approaches to the ocean of eternity. But this brings me to shew,

Secondly, How necessarily those must be disappointed, who place their happiness in any thing exclusive of religion and virtue.

When we first make our entrance into the world, we are too apt to form sanguine notions and gaudy prospects of bliss; a thousand luxuriant scenes present themselves to our view. But by that time we reach the noon of life, experience of the world, frequent crosses and disappointments, call home our straggling thoughts, lower our notions of happiness, and reduce them to a just sense of things; to what is really attainable in this state; which is at best (for any length of time) not true pleasure, but rather a freedom from pain.

And if a man, at the close of life, were to make an impartial estimate, I doubt he would think his sufferings more than equivalent to his enjoyments: he would be unwilling, were the choice given him, to tread the same round over, and to measure life back again.

Few will deny this as to the poor, whose daily labour serves for little else but to get their daily bread, and their daily bread just refreshes and strengthens them to undergo their daily labour.

But the rich, you will say, have much fairer pretensions to happiness. Here then we may expect to find it, if any where: and yet they differ from others more in show than reality; and perhaps their passions, being more importunate and clamorous in their demands, in proportion to the superiority of their fortune, may make them only more pompously wretched than the vulgar. Greatness, by making pleasure familiar to them, flattens their relish for it; but gives a keener edge to every pain, which they must feel as well as others: it dulls their enjoyments, but points and quickens the sense of anguish and affronts. Indeed they may with application pursue this or that new pleasure, they may be fond for a while of a new acquisition; but when the gloss of novelty is once worn off, the transition is very natural from fondness to indifference: and that becomes tasteless and insipid to them, which they before so affectionately coveted. The eagerness of desire being over, we find that our reason was but the dupe of our imagination, which had painted things bigger than the life. Hence there is a restless agitation in our minds, still craving something new, still unsatisfied with it when possessed. Hence we are continually shifting the scene, expecting that happiness from a variety of enjoyments which we cannot find in any one of them. *All the rivers run into the sea, says the Wise Man, yet is the sea not full*: just so, though all earthly pleasures should centre in one soul, yet would not that soul be filled and satisfied; because as the soul is a spiritual being, nothing but spiritual pleasures can, in propriety of speech, be suitable to its nature, and proportioned to its grandeur. Hence that great king, after he had travelled through, and curiously surveyed every region of pleasure, returned at last to virtue, the native country of the soul, in which only she could dwell with satisfaction.

Here then the mistake lies; people in their enquiries after happiness place it on improper objects; they are looking for it abroad, and have recourse to a thousand diversions and amusements, whilst it is only to be found at home, in the right use of reason; in passions well regulated and directed; in a delightful self-consci-

ousness in having done all the good in our power; in having employed our time to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind.

But if happiness be the exercise of our faculties upon proper objects, that surely must be the noblest happiness when our minds are exercised upon the noblest objects.

How comes it then, that this great truth is generally overlooked—that those especially, who make the pursuit of happiness the great business of their lives; that those, who should command a more spacious prospect by standing upon higher ground, and enjoying a more commodious situation in the world, are yet as dead to all sentiments of piety as the meanest peasant, or most illiterate mechanic? Why, the drudgery of business cannot more effectually sink and debase the mind of the latter, than a constant circle of gay follies does that of the former: for even innocent amusements, when too often repeated, and too much indulged, do as effectually destroy true piety as sensual pleasures themselves: because the mind, by being fixed on trifles, is disabled and indisposed for greater and more important business. These diversions, however innocent in themselves, may yet, by an excess of them, become criminal, as they are attended with very bad consequences; as they destroy all manliness of soul, and occasion that levity of temper, which exposes us to the inroads of temptation, and makes us susceptible of ill impressions. When steadiness, the anchorage of the soul, is once lost, she becomes the sport of the passions, and is carried away with every wind.

From this fountain, from that amazing folly of our great ones, in running after every public entertainment, how trifling and ridiculous soever it may be, has flowed that fashionable indifference and disregard for every thing that is serious and sacred. The day which is more immediately set apart for the service and worship of God, is generally profaned: and an habit of gaming has extinguished every sentiment of devotion. Nor does the misfortune end here: inferiors are proud to form themselves upon the model of their superiors: and when those who

are bound by all the ties of gratitude to that God who giveth them all things richly to enjoy, to advance the interests of religion, and to enlarge its empire, stamp a credit upon vice and irreligion, by this means a gate is opened to all manner of profaneness; men commonly thinking it some excuse for their crimes, if they can plead the example of their betters in favour of them. *

What then? will some one say; is this your way to happiness? Must we bid adieu to all diversions? By no means. I would not be understood to ~~decry~~ amusements in general; I only condemn them, when they take up too much of our time, and interfere with nobler pursuits: for certainly we were not placed in this world, like the leviathan in the deep, only to take our pastime therein. There are duties to be performed by us; and, as a motive to our obedience, the great law-giver has made these duties and our happiness consistent with each other; they go hand in hand, and the pleasure which results from virtue is sufficient recommendation of it to our practice. Who ever relieved the indigent without feeling within himself the greatest complacency and satisfaction? Compare the pleasures of sobriety and temperance with those of rioting and excess; the sweet sleep of labour and industry with the broken and disturbed slumbers of idleness and luxury, and reason will soon convince you which deserves to have the preference.

We may therefore lay it down as a maxim of undoubted truth, that none is a greater epicure than the true sincere Christian; none are greater self-deniers than the abandoned in pleasure; as they cut themselves off from the most valuable enjoyments; as they contract a littleness of soul, and a dishish and insensibility to every generous sentiment to humanity and goodness; as they must be obliged to a thousand trifles to fill up the mighty void of thought, to shut out that importunate intruder self-reflection, and to keep off that sullenness which must come upon a mind conscious of no intrinsic worth; and when some years, each more flat and insipid than another, are thus spent, they have no reason to value this life, but merely because they are afraid of a future.

The conclusion of all is, happiness consists in our placing it upon true and proper objects. We have seen, that *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, cannot secure it to us. Let us therefore seek for it where it is only to be found, in the practice of virtue and religion. And *pure and undefiled religion is this*, to relieve the distressed, to have an universal charity for all men, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

SERMON LXX.

By JOHN TOTTIE, D. D.

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Ridicule, so far as it affects Religion, considered and censured.

2 PETER, iii. 3.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers.

It would be a great point gained in the cause of truth, if we could once persuade men to reason calmly and dispassionately about it; if they could be brought to debate on things serious in a serious manner, and to govern all their inquiries, in matters of an allowed importance, by the rules of decency and sobriety. No man that is a real friend to religion, can be willing to oppose a rational examination into the truth of any opinions or doctrines, that come recommended to us by the authority of so venerable a name: not only because this would be an impregnable security to error, where it had ever taken possession, but because the interest of truth itself must be injured by it; which may give room for suspicion, when it declines a scrutiny, but will, like gold in the furnace, retain all its weight and purity in the trial, and shine even with a greater lustre for the severity of it. But then likewise every man who professes himself to be a free inquirer into religious concerns, should bring with him a mind duly disciplined to render his inquiries successful. Having laid in a proper store of previous knowledge to inform his understand-

ing, he must be satisfied of the vast importance of the matters he is about to take into consideration; he must approach them with modesty and reverence, examine them with meekness and sincerity, and judge of them with impartiality. Those who are already settled in true religious principles would not long be at variance with such a disposition as this. But it is one thing, to convince men who delight in instruction, and another, to prepare men to be capable of conviction. This is a task of difficulty and labour indeed. For whilst a levity of mind, an affectation of novelty, an undistinguishing aversion to superstition, the self-sufficiency of ignorance or superficial inquiry, the prevalence of fashion, or contagion of evil acquaintance, and, above all, strong prejudice in favour of vicious habits, determine men severally against the doctrines and duties of our holy religion, how shall we go about to explain or enforce either the one or the other? In vain to such unbelievers do we oppose the strength of reason and argument, when they lose all their force merely because they are advocates for religion; whilst, for the same reason, every little plausible plea that can be urged in favour of infidelity is pressed as a demonstration. And, to aggravate the misfortune, these are a generation so wise in their own eyes, that as they will not give ear to admonition, so neither will they be prevailed upon to be silent; obstinate in error, they labour for proselytes to it; like the deaf adder, they will not hear the voice of the charmer, and the poison of it is under their lips. It is notwithstanding our duty, with whatever success it may be attended, to persevere in recommending the interests of Christ and his religion, by the force of our doctrine, and by the example of our lives; and especially it behoves us, since we place the success of our cause upon the truth of it, that we neither defend it ourselves in such a manner as to weaken it, nor suffer our adversaries to overthrow it by subtlety and stratagem; and that, as we may be sure, they can be furnished with no arguments against us from right reason, so we suffer them not, without detection, to substitute fallacies in their room.

It falls not within my present design, to enumerate or distinguish by their several kinds all the arts of false reasoning by which they pervert the judgment of mankind, seduce the illiterate and unwary and even sometimes perplex the diligent and more learned inquirer. As sophistry is their science, it must be owned that some of them are great proficients in it, and can furnish out examples to every rule. But my text confines me to the consideration of a particular artifice, which, though it has little to do with reason, and rarely with the appearance of it, has perhaps done more mischief in general to true religion, than every other craft beside; I mean that of mockery and ridicule. And I am supported in this assertion by an author of great name, who, though he has loudly declared himself an advocate for the free use of them upon all subjects, yet seems to think, that if they had but been seasonably applied, they might have crushed Christianity in its infancy. "He never heard that the ancient Heathens (though the irreligious part of them had long before tried the same method, unsuccessfully it seems, against some of their own philosophers) were so well advised in their ill purpose of suppressing the Christian religion in its first rise, as to make use at any time of what he calls a *Bartlemew-fair* method; but this he is persuaded of, that had the truth of the gospel been any way surmountable, they would have bid much fairer for the silencing it, if they had chose to bring our primitive founders up on the stage in a pleasanter way than that of bear-skins and pitch-barrels; and he is apt to think, that if the Jews had tried their wit and malice this way against our Saviour and his Apostles, they might possibly have done our religion more harm than by all their other ways of severity." Now though we know that Christianity is built upon a sure foundation which can never be removed, and accordingly has from the beginning surmounted the united efforts of mockery and persecution, (as Christ himself was clothed with a robe of purple, and hailed as a mock-king, before he was led to his crucifixion; and as the apostles of Christ were exposed to the derision as well as to the cruelty of their enemies,)

yet so far we must agree, that nothing has done or can do our religion greater harm than ridicule, in totally subverting the faith of many, and weakening that of more. A persuasion of the truth of this remark will be apt to make us startle a little at another of the same author's, which is not easily to be reconciled with this, and may deserve to be taken into consideration. For in another place he would have "ridicule to be the proper test of what is serious, as gravity is of ridicule; because a subject that will not bear raillery is suspicious, just as a jest that will not bear a serious examination is false wit." The reason of this he had given us before. "For that, says he, which can be shewn only in a certain light is questionable. Truth, it is supposed, may bear all lights; and one of those principal lights or natural mediums by which things are to be viewed in order to a thorough recognition is ridicule itself; which he calls that manner of proof, by which we discern whatever is liable to just railery in any subject." The insinuation designed is obvious, that true religion can never suffer by this method, though imposture may. Now, forasmuch as ridicule is here represented in such a light as to render it upon all occasions not only innocent but laudable, as being a sure guide to lead us to the knowledge of the truth, and a never-failing test to try the worth of every principle and opinion; and because an acquiescence in this notion may be attended with very fatal consequences, (even where the ridicule is as gentle as this author pleases; a quality that may in some cases render it even more dangerous, as it engages the favour of mankind to whatever it accompanies,) I shall endeavour in the remaining part of my discourse to shew,

I. That an inclination to ridicule is apt to lead men off from any serious inquiries at all: that it cannot in itself avail to the discovery or the trial of religious truths; and that the practice of it is neither a proper nor effectual method to promote the interest of them.

II. I shall observe how those who pretend most to this talent of ridicule do in reality employ it: and shall expostulate with them a little upon their conduct.

III. In order to render this discourse

more useful, I shall briefly recommend some means of securing our religion and ourselves against any attacks that may come from this quarter.

I. If, as I have laid down in my first observation, a fondness for ridicule is apt to lead men off from any serious inquiries at all, it will follow, that we ought to be cautious how we indulge ourselves in a propensity or inclination to it; because, allowing that it might be of service if properly applied, yet in all likelihood we never shall make that right application. And that the foregoing observation is just, experience will teach us, and reason may account for what experience teaches us to be true.

For whatever qualities may be necessary to furnish men with a talent for ridicule, yet we shall almost universally find a levity of mind to be the main spring that acts in action, as it disposes them to merriment and to treat every thing ludicrously that falls in their way. And accordingly we may observe, that what those, who are eminent in this character, seek after and labour for, is only something to be witty upon: and so fond are they of shewing their abilities at a jest, that whenever it occurs, they throw it out, in season or out of season; at friends, at religion, and on the most solemn occasions. Nor indeed is it to be presumed, that men bigotted to this kind of wit will ever lose an opportunity of exerting it; or that they will be restrained in what they say to propriety and decency, when sprightliness and humour is all that they aim at. It is evident that men of this turn must be impatient, if not incapable, of cool and sedate reflection, and must have a frame of spirit opposite to every thing that is grave and manly. They can be no more inclined to, than they are qualified for, sober inquiries. For how should they, think ye, perplex themselves with abstracted reasonings, with examination of first principles, and pursue a tedious deduction of consequences from them, in order to settle (what they are in no care to have at all settled) their thoughts? Is it likely that these should give themselves the pain of long and laborious searches, which the perverse disputings of men have in many cases made

necessary for the disentangling of truth, whose profession is only to make themselves sport? Or is it probable, that they should concern themselves to any useful purpose with the more obvious duties of religion, which carries too grave an aspect to recommend itself to such an acquaintance, which condemns all foolish jesting, and is itself the most serious thing in the world?

Indeed, that men of this turn should have made some superficial inquiries into religious matters, and that by a slender application they should have furnished themselves with a kind of skill therein, which is worse than ignorance, namely, that of raising doubts and difficulties without knowing, or caring for, a solution, is as readily to be accounted for as admitted: because hence is raised their lasting fund for ridicule, without which they would have but few opportunities of displaying their talent. For as true ridicule should be levelled at things really and nothing more than absurd, such as are fit to excite no other passion than the bare derision of mankind, so we shall find it to be a work of too delicate and subtle a spirit, to be performed by every pretender to it: whereas there is a kind of it that is open to the most bungling capacity, which consists entirely in misrepresenting, by a ludicrous manner, things truly serious and solemn. And the more they are so, the more is the ridicule heightened by it; as persons are the more exposed by an antic representation in proportion to the gravity of their characters. Thus will a fondness for ridicule in all probability prevent men from entering at all into any inquiries relating to religious matters, any further than as they will furnish materials to them for the exercise of their wit.

But supposing that it was possible for men of this trivial and fantastical frame of mind to busy themselves in earnest in an inquiry into religious opinions and doctrines, in order to think aright, and to act agreeably to a deliberate judgment; yet I must further observe, that their talent of ridicule would not in the least avail them in this case, either as an assistant in the pursuit, or as a criterion for the trial, of the truth. This will effectually appear from the nature of truth itself, and the

means which that will necessarily point out for the attainment of it. Now truth, as far as human understanding is the subject of it, "consists in the perception of the visible or probable agreement or disagreement of ideas, as they are affirmed or denied one of another." It is evident, that in order to this perception, judgment is the most useful faculty of the mind, which is that of discerning and distinguishing between the several ideas it has. Without this, all our thinking would be nothing but confusion, and upon it depends the evidence and certainty of every truth which the mind of man can, by the assistance of its own powers, attain to. And the nicety and exactness of judgment consists in accurately separating, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity, to take one thing for another. Whatever therefore tends to disturb, to pervert, or to embarrass, this faculty, must in proportion render us less capable of attaining to, or discerning the truth. That ridicule has such a tendency, the very nature of it will inform us. For as it is properly that species of wit, which aims to expose things to laughter by a fantastical and ludicrous representation of them, it will so far appear to partake of the nature of wit in general, as to lie rather in putting together, in order to please and to surprise, ideas wherein can be found any distant resemblance or congruity, than in a careful observation wherein they differ; and whilst the great aim of it is to form burlesque pictures rather than true images in the mind, and it must of consequence be more solicitous to divert the imagination than to instruct the understanding, we shall find, that for once that it will lead to us the knowledge of truth, it will a thousand times misguide us. Nay, in some particular instances, ridicule may not only probably, but must necessarily lead us, from a right of notion of things, namely, whenever it intermeddles with any doctrines of religion, that should happen to be agreeable to truth; although it is pretended, that these can possibly receive no prejudice from it. For as it is the end of ridicule to expose things to laughter and derision, and as truly religious matters we have not any thing in them that is liable

to this sort of treatment, so they must necessarily be disguised and misrepresented by false colours, before they can in any degree be capable of it. Where then will be the possibility of knowing and distinguishing the truth, when it shall so resemble error, that we shall be no longer able to delineate the genuine features of it? or how can that be an assistant towards the discovery of it, which is the very thing that puts on it the mask?

But, further: Neither is ridicule at all a better criterion for the trial of truth, than it is an assistant to us in the pursuit of it. It is by no means proving it to be so, by asserting that truth is to be tried by ridicule, because it never can prevail against the truth; that if it be wrong placed, it will recoil upon itself, and be its own corrector in the end: and that mocking at things truly serious and venerable, fixes a reproach upon the understanding of him only that attempts it. For though we know that truth will so far prevail, as to be incapable of being made false by any artifices whatsoever, yet may it not by being ridiculed appear to be so, and lose much of that good effect which it might otherwise have produced? and may not a hasty determination be made to the prejudice of it, before the ridicule is discerned to be false? Nay, may not persecution, or any other the most injurious treatment of religion, be as well recommended upon this principle for the trial of truth, because in the end it will be superior to them all? And though we allow that a man may, by a misapplication of his wit, make himself truly ridiculous to those who have just notions of things; yet we must be sensible that the generality of men are not competent judges whether it be exercised unreasonably or duly; nor are they able truly to distinguish between what falls under ridicule, and what really deserves to do so. And I would ask even those who are capable of weighing things in an equal balance, and of making just and equitable determinations, how it is that they themselves can tell, whether ridicule is pointed at its proper object, or not? Can it be known any otherwise than by the cool deliberation of the understanding, which must take things as they are in themselves under examination, and conclude from a

judicious inquiry into the true nature of them, whether they deserve to be treated ludicrously or not? Or can they justify even to themselves their raillery of any thing, till they have by reason and reflection first satisfied themselves that it is irrational and absurd? Now what kind of a test that is, which must itself be tried by another criterion, namely that of strict reason, before it can be admitted as such, when this latter is capable of answering every purpose much better without it; and how useless such a rule must be to measure religious truth by; I shall leave to the determination of every serious and unprejudiced mind.

But the most specious plea of all in behalf of this practice is yet behind, and which carries the greater weight with it, because it has sometimes been espoused by those who have been indisputably friends to the cause of virtue and religion. It has been urged, that though ridicule is in no wise to be proposed as a guide to conduct us to the knowledge of religious truths, or as a standard to prove them by, yet when they are once established upon their proper foundation, and have approved themselves to our calm and deliberate judgment, that then it may be of considerable service, both in the defence and recommendation of them: that it may be prevalent to silence unreasonable opposition; to keep true piety in countenance, and to make irreligion ashamed. That that weapon may be successfully employed on the righteous side, which has so often fought the battles of profaneness and infidelity; or to make use of an ingenious allusion, that it is truly useful and good so long as it retains, "the nature of that salt to which it is usually compared, which preserves and keeps sweet the good and the sound parts of all bodies, and only fets, dries up, and destroys, those humours which putrify and corrupt."

It is not because I would deprive religion of any aid whatsoever that can contribute to the security of it, but because I would have no auxiliaries called in to its assistance, whose fidelity and services are questionable, that I proceed notwithstanding to observe, that ridicule is neither a proper nor effectual method to promote the real interest of religion.

As for the gainsayers, it is in vain to think of silencing them by retaliation of raillery; who then only are enabled to oppose the truth with success, when the trial of it is put upon a wrong issue: it never can be effectually done but by serious argumentation proposed in the spirit of meekness and charity. The former alone will secure our cause, and the latter will contribute much to win over our adversaries. Whilst we rely upon strict reasoning only, we secure to ourselves a sure foundation; and a soft answer is a recommendation to others of the reasonings it contains. Whereas there is an acrimony in ridicule, which will exasperate rather than reclaim men, and make them incapable of receiving the truth by prejudicing them against it; and ourselves it will be apt to delude by setting up false lights, and may give our adversaries an advantage over us by leading us out of the way.

Much less should ridicule intrude itself into matters of controversy betwixt Christians themselves; as it seems to carry in it a spirit directly contrary to that of the religion they profess; as it lays both parties open to the scoffs of their common enemies; and as it can only shew at last, not which has the most righteous cause, but which has the keenest pen. Experience may teach us some of the mischiefs of this practice: for instances may be given wherein men have set out in a serious dispute on matters of importance, and have seemed to promise much success therein from their debates, while they were confined to argument and directed by moderation; till, raillery and ridicule having supplanted reasoning, the point in question was no longer in view; what was before a friendly contest for the truth, became a spiteful trial of wit, and from a difference of opinion grew an irreconcilable hatred in the heart. So much more likely is ridicule to perpetuate quarrels, than to decide a dispute.

If upon any religious occasions, ridicule seems to be allowable, it must be with regard to such opinions, as are evidently erroneous; such especially as are so big with absurdities, and so contradictory to common sense, that it seems below the dignity of reason to undertake the refutation of them. And yet of what service

can it be even in this case? Whatever gave birth to such monsters, it is plain that strong prejudice alone keeps them alive; which even impresses on them a sacred character. To endeavour to laugh men out of such prejudices, is to confirm them the more in them; as their conversion is never likely to be brought about by such means as must inspire them with horror. Rather let kindness and persuasion remove the prejudice, and then the error will be dispelled of course.

Neither is ridicule at all fit to be trusted as proper to promote the practice of religion and virtue, by endeavouring to put vice and immorality out of countenance. These, I fear, are not of so modest a nature as to be capable of blushing; and if arguments of a more sublime kind, and such as are drawn from nobler motives, will not prevail against them, they are not to be vanquished by being laughed at. The obligation we are under to conform to the will of God, which is the foundation of duty; the essential and eternal differences of things, which constitute virtue and vice; the conformity of the one, and the disagreement of the other, to our nature; and the improvement or debasement of it consequent upon our different choice of acting; are the true motives to influence and determine a rational creature. The love of God to mankind, and his abhorrence of wickedness, exhibited in the mystery of our redemption; the precepts, the example, and the sufferings of our blessed Lord and Master; the life and immortality which he has revealed; the gracious promises of the gospel to allure men to goodness; and the dreadful judgments denounced against the obstinately profane; are still more forcible motives to persuade and to animate a Christian. If men's minds are steeled against receiving any impression from such topics as these, it is even a kind of presumption to expect it from ridicule; which besides we are not authorised to make use of, either by revelation or by reason. It was not the practice of Christ and his apostles to make a jest of men's vices; but they discountenanced all such behaviour, as much as might be, both by their doctrine and by their examples. Even Solomon himself, who insists so much upon

the folly of wickedness, does not treat it ludicrously as for his diversion, but speaks of it as a folly more apt to move melancholy than mirth, even as the folly of foolishness and madness. And reason itself may likewise inform us, that nothing is so likely to lessen the natural veneration and awe in men, with which the consideration of religious matters is attended, and upon which in a great measure depends the good effect they are likely to produce in the mind, as a light and ludicrous treatment of them. Men will be apt to think that things cannot be of any mighty consequence, which even those who recommend them make so free withal themselves; and that neither danger nor death is at hand, where those that denounce them are themselves in sport.

Is ridicule then of no real use at all? and is it absolutely to be banished out of the world? To assert this would seem too severe perhaps to those, who think they have a talent for it. But so long as it is left in full possession of every folly, of every absurdity and extravagance in life; in short, of all things that are blemishes in human conduct, rather than vices, the advocates for it will have no reason to complain that it will ever want employment. And though I have been labouring to exclude it from all concerns in religion, even where it offers its assistance and friendship, yet I have not done it by representing it in this last case as a thing criminal so much as imprudent to admit of it; neither do I accuse those who are for enlisting it in the service of religion of any treacherous designs, but have only offered my reasons why I disapprove of their design.

And if from the foregoing considerations it shall appear, that ridicule is not even fit to be allowed of in the support of religion, how strong must be the conclusion, that it never should be employed to the destruction of it? If it stands in need of excuse even in a good man and in a good cause, how utterly unpardonable must it be, when used by bad men to bad purposes? For it is not to be expected that the pleasantry of wickedness should take away the malignity of it, or that wit should atone for sin. And yet that there is a daring tribe of men, that

declare open war with it against every thing that is sacred, it is now time to shew under my second general head, where I am,

II. To observe, how those who pretend most to this talent of ridicule do in reality employ it, and to expostulate with them a little upon their conduct.

The first sort of men that fall under our notice, are those who shoot out their arrows against all religion in general; who have no just notions of God and his attributes; deny or disregard his providence; confound all distinctions of moral good and evil; and have no sense at all of the dignity of human nature. These having, as they call it, enlarged their thoughts, and being under no manner of restraint from principles, look down with pity and contempt upon those who are still shackled with them, and have not thrown off all regard to reason and conscience. How do these men of unlimited freedom make diversion with slaves who own themselves to be under inspection, and accountable for their actions! It is matter to them of endless derision, that we, who are but a better kind of brutes, should pay such homage to virtue, as to renounce the pleasures of the world, and often subject ourselves to present cares and inconveniences, for the sake of it, when all that we can propose to ourselves is a precarious expectancy in reversion; much more, when this idol Virtue that we fall down before, is nothing but a phantom, the creature of our own foolish imaginations; or at best depends only upon custom, and the arbitrary constitution of human laws. And, accordingly, there is not a single moral virtue, which they would not banter out of the world, by miscalling it by some reproachful name. If we shew zeal for the honour of God, they will mock at our enthusiasm; if we worship and fear him, at our superstition. Whatever generous things have been done for the welfare of mankind, will meet with no better a name than that of folly, or vanity, or design; and all private goodness will be exposed by them as grimace, hypocrisy, and preciseness. In a word, *Whatever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if*

there be any praise; these things they make the constant subject of their mockery and abuse, ridicule and railery. On the contrary, whatever things are profane, and impure, and vile, and dishonourable, these things they are industrious to represent as harmless and indifferent, and to laugh men out of their natural shame and abhorrence of them; nay, even to recommend them with their utmost wit.

If these men could be supposed capable of sober reflection, I would expostulate with them in the following manner: What (in the name of all that's sacred!) is there ridiculous in the belief of a supreme, infinite, intelligent Mind, the Creator and Governor of the universe? Is it not most absurd and foolish to suppose the contrary, if we will but reflect upon the vastness and regularity and exactness of this beautiful system? And may not the surprising harmony continually preserved in all the parts of it, very reasonably persuade us, that the great Author of it still holds it together by his providence, keeping it uniformly in subjection to the laws he at first prescribed? What is there ludicrous in supposing also this being to be just, and holy and good, and therefore the same God of order in the moral world as he is in the natural? That for that reason, he created man with an excellent understanding to discern good from evil; and with freedom of will, to make him capable, according to his behaviour, of reward or punishment? Can it excite any but the laughter of fools, when we place the excellency of man's nature in his rational faculties, and the justness of his conduct in the regulation of it by reason: What folly is there in submitting ourselves to that which was given us for our guide and instructor? Or how can we find any thing ridiculous in those actions, which our governing principle not only approves of but commands? Is there any thing weak or extravagant in the reverence and love of God, in submitting to his government, in celebrating his perfections, and acknowledging our constant dependence upon him? Justice and probity, are they become a grity and benevolence towards us, the scoffer? or likewise nothing in them that

to be laughed at; but, on the contrary, both from the reasonableness and the usefulness of them are truly valuable. Temperance, sobriety, and chastity, though they are common subjects of derision, are upon every account to be embraced, and have at all times been held in esteem by men of sense and worth. In short, there is not in any principle of natural religion, nor in any duty it recommends, any thing wild or absurd, or fantastical or trifling; nothing, on the contrary, but what is highly rational, important, sacred. How great then is the folly and madness and impiety of those, who thus wantonly shoot arrows against Heaven, that must return upon their own heads; and who scatter fire-brands and death among men, and say are we not in sport? Too much, it is to be feared, does the world abound even with this sort of men: but the other class that falls under our censure is perhaps yet more numerous; which consists of those

Who would be thought to be convinced of the obligation, and to allow of the duties of natural religion, but are declared enemies to all revealed, and ridicule the belief of it upon every occasion with all the malice of wit. Now considering the great antiquity that revelation lays claim to, which in some instances, to give a probable account of things, must have been coeval with mankind itself; together with the general belief of it, which, however impaired, has prevailed more or less in almost all places and ages; even this alone should screen it from any insolent abuse of those who disbelieve it themselves; and considering that Christianity itself pleads a prescription of seventeen hundred years, and is at this time the established religion of our own country, it ought at least by those who suspect the grounds of it, to be examined with candour, and to be proceeded against with discretion and gentleness. For there is a decent regard due to the religion of a country, though it shall prove an erroneous

To laugh at the public upon any point, is to be wanting in that respect is due to common society; much is the insolence when private nature to deride those things which

are the object of public veneration. Whoever, therefore, instead of refuting errors by reason and temper, will treat in a contemptuous manner what carries with it to others a sacred character, can only give scandal where he should endeavour at a reformation, and must shew himself to be equally a stranger to good sense and to good manners. And yet this is the favourite method of infidelity. Ridicule is the vein that runs through the writings, and what seasons the conversation of the unbelievers of the age. And then as much triumph arises from having flung a bold jest at Christianity, as if they had actually overthrown it by mere dint of reasoning. The ancient enemies of it were no strangers to this practice; and the arts of those have been revived and improved too in these latter days. The grossest misrepresentations have received an edge from ridicule, in order to make our religion despised, that it might finally be rejected of men. In order to this, has not the necessity, nay expediency, of Christianity been scoffed at as a jest? Have not the strong evidence and testimonies by which it is supported, all in their turn, been the subject of much drollery and licentious mirth? Has not almost every particular doctrine of it been attacked in the most scurrilous manner; and the sacred pages, which contain those doctrines, been derided, vilified, exploded; and perverted by ludicrous quotations to every profane and impious purpose? And the better to complete their design, have not those who, by Christ's own institution, are more particularly appointed to teach and to defend his religion, been the standing mark at which they incessantly shoot their sharpest arrows, even bitter words? And has not their satire against them been generally of that kind, which is of all others the most scurrilous and illiberal?

I must here again beg leave to renew my expostulation, and to inquire a little into the justifiableness of such proceedings.

With regard to the foundation of Christianity, I would ask of them, whether there is any thing ridiculous in supposing (what cannot well be denied) that all

mankind had transgressed the original law of God, whether it was natural only, or also revealed; and that they had consequently involved themselves in the guilt of sin: that God is a being infinite in justice as well as mercy; and that, according to our conceptions, it is as much the property of the one, before a reconciliation with offenders, to insist upon some atonement, as it is a token of the other, graciously to accept it: that his purity would likewise incline him to stigmatize wickedness with the most flagrant marks of his displeasure, that righteousness might be the more effectually established: that accordingly he sent his only begotten Son into the world, to take human nature upon him; and in that to be a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the whole world: that by any extraordinary revelation, (communicated at a time when ignorance and vice had almost universally overspread the face of the earth, and when the footsteps of religion could only be traced in the ruins that superstition had wrought.) he taught mankind their duty in a more perfect and explicit manner, than it had ever been known before; that he fenced in his laws with the most proper sanctions, and promised us such assistance for the fulfilling of them, concurrent with our own endeavours, as the mere natural man must want, both as an encouragement and as a support. This is but an imperfect sketch of the Christian scheme; but enough to discover that there is much in it to excite our adoration of the divine goodness, but nothing to create our mirth.

With regard to the external evidence of this religion, I would ask, whether (beside the concurrence of other testimony) the completion of many prophecies that went before concerning Christ, and the miracles which he himself wrought, are not a sufficient attestation of the truth of it? As this is too clear a point to be denied, allowing their authority, I would ask concerning the prophecies, whether in answer to all the cavils brought against this kind of proof, it has not been undeniably shewn by the labours of the learned, that they are truly of the date they pretend to; that the interpretations of them are consistent and warrantable;

and that the Jews, to whom they were more immediately directed, did all along apply them to the Messiah, although they must know that some of them had likewise a view to other events: and whether they were not all in general fulfilled by Jesus Christ so minutely, as they never were nor could be by any body else? And in relation to the miracles of our Saviour, which have been bantered as illusion, or what is even less than that, as mere allegories; it may likewise be demanded, whether they have not in general been proved to carry in them all the genuine marks that it is possible for any true miracle to have, and whether every one in particular has not been clearly vindicated from the imputation of some imaginary incongruities with which they have been unreasonably charged? If the opposers of Christianity, upon account of its evidence, have not seriously taken into consideration the arguments that have been brought in support of it, it would be decent in them to suspend their wit till they have better informed their judgment; and if they have, they should confute before they ridicule.

If we proceed to examine into the intrinsic value of our religion, are the doctrines of it a proper subject of derision, which are beyond dispute a better system of morality, than is to be collected from the wisdom of philosophy scattered through all the writings of the world beside? And if there are some few more speculative ones (which may have their moral uses too) relating to the divine essence, and to the work of man's redemption, which may be attended with some difficulties inexplicable by human understanding, are they therefore to be rejected with mockery; because the whole mystery of God's wonderful dispensations is not laid open to our view; or because we cannot comprehend the manner of an infinite existence, though we are absolute strangers to that of our own? Or is it fit that the sacred books themselves, the repository of these doctrines, which are the refuge, the consolation, and the delight, of every good man, should be trodden under foot and vilified, and become a bye-word to the profane and the scoffer? Or is it a sufficient justification of such

usage, because men will venture rashly to pronounce upon them, without any one requisite qualification; or because some particular expressions and passages in them, occasioned by the peculiarities of the language, or of the manners and customs of a remote age, give offence to those, whose extent of knowledge reaches only to modern notions and practices? Or, lastly, is it at all becoming, that those who by the appointment of Christ himself are the guardians and teachers of his doctrines, should upon that very account alone, be exposed to ridicule and mockery, to scurrility and abuse? But if that which ought to raise their character tends only to depreciate it, and if the scoffers are resolved to despise all men in their hearts, that have any peculiar relation to the religion of Christ; yet other considerations should induce them to be more decent in their behaviour, and to put some restraint upon their tongues. Some motive to this it should be to reflect, that the clergy are under the common protection of the same civil government with themselves, and have therefore a title to common civility, even by virtue of the laws of their country: that they are men of a liberal education, that they may be duly qualified for, and are sequestered from every inconsistent employment, that they may without interruption attend upon the services of religion: that it is by no means matter of just offence, that some also amongst them, should by their station and authority have a proper influence to guard the interests of it: that they do in general discharge their duty conscientiously and well; teaching the religion of Christ in its primitive purity; defending it by their learning, of which perhaps no body of men in the world has a larger share, and adorning it by the integrity of their lives; that where some are ignorant or vicious, the reproach should fall upon the persons culpable, and not upon the order; but that they rather should be counted worthy of double honour, who have maintained the dignity of their character, and preserved it without spot or blemish. But this practice, however reasonable in itself, is not to be expected from the scoffers: for as decency is nearly allied

to virtue, we shall find the enemies of the one to be generally as much strangers to the other. Leaving them therefore to their own conduct,

III. It remains only, in the last place, to recommend briefly some means of best securing our religion and ourselves against the attacks that may come from this quarter.

1. The first thing necessary for this purpose, is a thorough knowledge of the grounds and principles of our religion. When we know the reason of the hope that is in us, it then becomes an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast; which will hinder us from fluctuating amidst a diversity of unsettled opinions, and will keep us firm and immoveable against all the overflowings of infidelity: conviction arising from an insight to truth, will inspire us in every conflict, and will be a defence to us against the craft of sophistry and the sting of ridicule. Secure in the strength of a rational belief, the enemy can have no advantage over us, nor the wicked approach to hurt us. But if we profess to teach a religion that we have only taken upon trust, as our notions concerning it will be erroneous, so our instructions will misrepresent it, and our defences betray it. An injurious exposition, or an injudicious vindication, will run the best of causes, and lay the author of them open to certain mockery and contempt. How careful therefore should we be to furnish ourselves by proper application, with all necessary and useful knowledge for the service of religion, lest peradventure we be found to fight against God, even out of a zeal for his honour!

2. The second thing requisite for our security in the case before mentioned, is courage and constancy in our persuasion; or, in the apostle's phrase, boldness in the faith. Our first business should be, to be well acquainted with the truth, the next to hold it fast. If we cannot withstand a little banter and ridicule when we have Christ himself on our side, how scandalous must be our retreat, and how vigorously must we expect the advantage to be pursued! We give a satirical enemy great opportunities of triumph, when we give ground ever so little through fear, irresolution, or shame. And

well may the great Captain of our Salvation disown such service as withdraws itself upon being laughed at only, when he insists upon the fidelity of it, even in the fiery trial of persecution. Hear, and tremble at the consequence of such a base desertion: *Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* (Mark, viii. 38.) But if we have boldness in him, we shall find it to be our security here, as well as our confidence (when we most shall want it) in the day of judgment.

3. A third thing which may be a defence to us against the scoffers, is that truly christian temper, a spirit of meekness. For a resolution to defend our religion, and an inoffensive manner of doing it, are by no means inconsistent. This behaviour is not only in itself becoming, but it is enjoined us. It is our Saviour's own express command, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. xi. 29.) and it is part of his character, that when he was reviled he reviled not again. The religion of Christ will allow of no arts in its defence or recommendation, that are not perfectly conformable to its rules. And this conduct may be particularly useful in blunting those arrows that are directed against ourselves; as skilful contenders will oft-times best elude the force of a blow, by not bearing up too rashly against it, and yet at the same time can resolutely maintain their ground. This, likewise, is the most probable method of disarming our adversaries themselves, who must, by this means, if by any, be won over to a decent behaviour, when they see that all their calumny and spite and abuse cannot provoke us to a return of ill usage; but that our only aim is, by all gentle arguments of persuasion, to reduce them from error to the acknowledgment of the truth. It is, in short, the duty of a Christian, not to be overcome of evil; and it is no less his duty, to overcome evil with good.

4. The last thing I shall mention, necessary for the security of our religion, and of ourselves, against the scoffers, is holiness of life. As unreasonable a thing

as it is, to make Christianity accountable for that wickedness which it utterly condemns, yet we may observe, that the deepest and most incurable wounds are given it through those who dishonour it more by professing, than they could injure by denying it. Truth, however bright in itself, may yet be obscured, and lose much of its native splendour in the eyes of men, by the foulness of the medium through which it is viewed. Such will be the influence of the life of a wicked Christian, who is both a scandal to himself, and a reproach to his profession. But a virtuous and holy conversation is the ornament and defence of both. It renders religion graceful and amiable to mankind; and esteem and affection arising from thence, will best guard it from every abuse. But, if it should at any time fall under contempt and ridicule, yet an exemplary Christian will be able to reply with a good grace to the scorner, when his own life is a vindication of his cause, not his cause, as it too often happens, a condemnation of himself. And what better support against particular abuse can a good man wish for, than a consciousness of sharing the same fate with religion itself? or can he be dismayed in suffering for the sake of it, when that also bears a part with him in the unjust reproach that he sustains? A religious man must be ill-treated by an irreligious world; but let this be his confidence, that the scene will soon be changed. Honour, and glory, and immortality, will be his portion, while insupportable shame and confusion shall overwhelm the scoffers. *For then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, this was he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered with the children of God, and his lot is among the saints?* (Wisd. v. 1—5.)

SERMON LXXI.

By Dr. TOTTIE.

The pernicious Effects of an intemperate Indulgence in sensual Pleasures.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, March 13, 1747 3.]

2 TIM., iii. 4.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

THE lovers of pleasures here mentioned by the Apostle are, as the original word properly imports, the lovers of sensual pleasures: and they are described as inordinate lovers of them; as men addicted to voluptuousness beyond a sense of duty, or the restraint of reason and religion. And, doubtless, this is designed to be represented to us as a denomination of great malignity, because it is ranked with a long train of the most enormous and profligate sinners, such as, we are told at the first verse of this chapter, were to be the characteristic and disgrace of the last days, when perilous times should come. Without inquiring how far these dangerous days began to discover themselves even in the apostolic age, let it suffice, that we ourselves are certainly within the period of time here described: and whatever may be our proportion of other guilt, so far as an avowed attachment to pleasures is destructive of the principles, and inconsistent with the regular duties of religion, and is an inlet to vice and disorder, so far perilous times are come. For, to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God and our duty, is one of the apparent distinctions of this age: a character so familiar to us, that it seems to have lost its natural deformity, and is rather looked upon with complacency than abhorrence. But opinion does not alter the reality of things: a life of dissoluteness cannot be innocent: and it will ever remain a most certain truth, that an irregular indulgence in sensual pleasures is that, which, above all things, debases human nature, and ever has been, and must be, the bane of human happiness.

Can we therefore employ our time more usefully, than in endeavouring to

rescue ourselves from the enchantment of such delusive, but unmanly and pernicious pleasures? Can I apply to you for this purpose in a more interesting manner, than by laying before you the fatal mischiefs of sensuality, by considering particularly, what devastation it makes in every constitution that is under the dominion of it, from the lowest stage of the animal life, to the highest powers and graces of the intellectual and the spiritual one? And although some of the following remarks may seem rather to belong to an abandoned prostitution, than to the lesser proficiencies in voluptuousness, yet they will be often found to be proportionably just in respect of the latter: or may serve, at least, as a friendly caution to those who are making gradual advances in vices of this kind, without reflecting upon their deceitful, insinuating, and encroaching nature.

We will then consider man, in the first place, as a creature endued with animal life, and furnished with all those sensations and appetites which are its necessary appendages. And here, before we proceed, it may be proper to observe, that, as they are born with us into the world, and are an essential part of our constitution, an imagination that the perfection of our being, in its present state, consists in I know not what annihilation and extirpation of them, is mere enthusiasm, as contrary to the sentiments of reason as of nature. This degree of perfection we cannot attain to, until *this corruptible shall have put on incorruption*. If, in the degenerate condition of humanity, they are too apt to be licentious and inordinate, all that is expected from our strength and discretion, is to watch over them with care, to direct them to their proper objects, and to govern them with a prudent restraint: lest our natural desires should grow impetuous and headstrong, and run wild into sinful concupiscence. Let it be further remarked, that, when concupiscence itself is said to have the nature of sin, it is because it is an irregular tendency of the appetites, either desiring that which is not lawful, or pursuing that which is so beyond the limits of reason and duty. Otherwise, the desires are natural, and therefore not criminal, and the gratification of them must be innocent, because

it is necessary. We are placed by Providence in this world not only under a necessity of satisfying them for the support of life, but with a gracious permission to gratify them with some degree of indulgence beyond strict necessity, for the comfort and well-being of it. This would not have been the case, had there been no possibility for us to have satisfied our appetites with innocence. They are not, therefore, absolutely, and in their own nature, sinful; but they are too apt to be the occasions and incitements to sin. Even good men may fall into their snare, through frailty or inadvertency; and, in this case, they cannot but feel and lament, as they will be allowed to offer in plea at the great tribunal, the infirmities of human nature. But as for those who submit to their dominion without reluctance, and joyfully obey the call of every vicious inclination, let them not vainly impute that guilt to an original depravity, which is an acquired corruption; nor charge those miseries to the account of nature, which are strictly and properly their own.

And here, indeed, it is, in the early prevalence of education and habit, that our infelicity begins. For, were we accustomed from the beginning to live according to nature, we should find the appetites in themselves, reasonable and modest; asking little, satisfied with little; but, like favourite children, they are soon corrupted by indulgence, and being trained up in the school of luxury, they find many wants which are not natural to them: being accustomed to be humoured, they become restless and importunate, and grow upon us in their demands by every compliance. It is evident, therefore, that every unreasonable gratification is only raising a new desire, and, whilst it seems to appease the appetites, irritates them the more. Could we, therefore, lay an early restraint upon them, and learn to gratify them no farther than God and nature allow, it would be the way to avoid much trouble and disquietude; we should be less solicited, and they would be more contented.

Add to this, that, when they have thus gained strength and vigour, and their wants multiply upon them through indulgence, then they soon grow wanton and fantasti-

cal; are roving from pleasure to pleasure; tired with the present enjoyment, and eagerly exploring and pursuing fresh objects of delight: so that we are in a state of perpetual agitation and uneasiness, not only from the violence of our desires, but from the frowardness and inconstancy of their humour. And what is still more, and cannot but necessarily happen, we must feel in proportion to the cravings of our irregular appetites, impatience and fretfulness from difficulties and delays, and vexation from frequent disappointments. Such are the disagreeable sensations that embitter the life of a voluptuary, and multiply with the increase of his pleasures.

As the scene opens upon us, it grows far more distressful. The appetites have been long indulged, they have the mastery, they have now the reins in their hands, and are hastening to put a final period to all the pleasurable sensations of their votaries, even by such means as must be continually extinguishing and deadening the very sensation itself. For an unwearied application to pleasures satiates and surfeits, rather than satisfies; it weakens the tone of the animal powers, and wears them gradually into disrelish, and perhaps into disuse, even before the course of nature brings on the years, *when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* Enjoyments of this kind must be destructive of themselves, because they impair and destroy that quickness of the faculties, and that health of constitution upon which their very nature depends. When the senses themselves grow dull, and wear away, the pleasures of them must of necessity be languid. And yet such is the peculiar infatuation of the voluptuous man, and, what would be utterly incredible, did not every day's observation confirm the truth of it in many a fatal instance, so absolute is their dominion, so strong is their enchantment, that though they chastise him with pain and diseases, and bring on the daily decay of health and strength, with trembling nerves and faltering steps, he crawls on in the same slippery path, till he falls and drops into the grave.

For the truth of the foregoing observations, we may appeal to experience. Inquire of those who have led a life of pleasure, as it is falsely called, whether, in respect of self-enjoyment, it be indeed pre-

ferable to a life of temperance and regularity. Ask the sensualist, who says, *there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink*, and whose happiness depends upon the unwilling returns of a jaded appetite, whether that compound of high and delicate meats which luxury improved into an art can supply, be not an offence to the stomach, a load to the constitution, and poison to the health. Whereas the man that is not surfeited with intemperance finds an enjoyment in his frugal repasts which artifice cannot give; he has no loathings of the appetite, no oppression of spirits; his sleep is sweet; he *eats the labour of his hands*, and finds that the bread of industry and temperance is far more delicious than the dainties of indolent luxury. Or *those that sit long at the wine*, what real pleasure do they find in that nausea and sickness, that relaxation and feebleness of body, which excess never fails to create? *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red*, says the Wise Man, *when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: at the last, it bitech like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* (Prov. xxiii. 31.) Ask the libidinous man; nay, rather, does not his very appearance declare, that lawless pleasures are dearly bought; and that he has reason, in the bitterness of his soul, to curse those impurities which prey upon the constitution, and are *rottenness to the bones*; which make youth decrepid, and hasten on an early and unnatural old age? It is difficult to mention this vice, and the foul train of miseries that attend it, in a decent and inoffensive manner: let me therefore close this branch of my discourse in the words of high and sacred authority, that will command your reverence and awe: *I beheld*, says Solomon, *among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding. And behold! there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks: till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* (Prov. vii. 7, 9, 21, 22, 23.) *Remove thy way,*

therefore, far from a strange woman, and come not nigh the door of her house; lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction, and despised reproof? (Prov. v. 8, 11, 12.)

I have been hitherto speaking to the sensualist as a creature possessed of animal life, and furnished with those appetites which are its necessary appendages; and have shewn the expediency of his putting a curb and restraint upon them, while possibly they may bear it, even upon his own principles, for the sake of preserving that very nature upon which all his pleasurable sensations depend. But he must likewise consider himself, however unwilling he may seem to do so, as a being of a much higher order, as one endued with the superior power of reason and understanding. Let our next inquiry, therefore, be, in what manner an intemperate pursuit of sensual pleasures must affect the intellectual part of us, which raises us far above the brutal life, even to a participation of the angelic nature.

And the first consideration that offers itself arises, in some measure, from the following ones, and results from that union of our souls and bodies, by which, in our present state, they mutually act upon each other, and sympathize in each other's affections. Hence, as any violent or continued disorder in the mind introduces a languid indisposition in our bodily frame, so the infirmities of the body do reciprocally enfeeble and dispirit the mind. If, therefore, an insidious application to sensual pleasures does certainly impair our bodily health and strength, it will proportionably waste the health and strength of the mind: it is not possible, where incontinence, riot, and luxury, have enervated the constitution, the soul should still retain its vigour, or have elasticity enough to exert itself in speculation or action. View but the man of pleasures, after a few years spent in the pursuit of them, and behold! frequently, in the end, what insupportable dejection, what gloominess and horrors overshadow and sit heavy on his soul!

But this is not all: sensual pleasures are hurtful to the mind other ways than by depressing it: and the mischief they

do is often felt in the intellectual faculties, even before it is derived from the constitution. They shut out, in the first place, the necessary supplies of knowledge, which is the food and nourishment of the understanding, and without which it cannot grow up to its full proportion and maturity. For an advancement in knowledge supposes discipline, application, assiduity, labour; exercises which are directly opposite to the whole scope and system of the man of pleasures, who cannot well be thought to have either leisure or inclination for such painful employments: for painful they must be to those who can have little taste or relish for the pleasures of the understanding, which are of a quite different and superior kind to those of sense, and to which it must seem against nature for them to rise, who wallow in the mire, and are entangled in sensuality. By this means, through the want of cultivation and improvement the intellectuals lose their ability, and grow unserviceable by too little use, as the senses decay and are worn out by too much.

Add to this, that sensual pleasures are directly injurious to the very essence of the mind, and maim it in all its faculties; so as to frustrate, in a great measure, any degree of application, could we be supposed to make use of it. It is with the constitution of the mind as of the body, no strength of it can withstand the repeated assaults of intemperance and excess. They spread a torpor, as it were, over the rational soul, and render it impotent in all its functions. The ferment of wine, and the fire of lust, raise an impure vapour in the brain, which overclouds and darkens the understanding. The imagination, that admirable faculty, whose proper employment it is to bring into our view all the wonderful and beautiful scenes of the creation, is no longer the handmaid of reason, but the creature of our appetites. This fair mirror is blotted over with the traces of foul desire, and every avenue is shut up against the admission of any object that might polish and refine it. Invention cannot expatiate, because it cannot break loose from those earthly, sensual incumbrances which oppress it. The memory becomes impaired; nor would it be any great misfor-

ture, should it be entirely obliterated, since it is at best but the storehouse of sensuality and impurity; nor has contemplation laid up there any treasures that can deserve a review. No time has been employed in the exercise of thought and reflection; whence arises not only an impatience, but an inability of thinking. In short, the rational part of the voluptuous man is incorporated, as it were, into the animal one; all his thoughts are the thoughts of his heart, and are, like that, sensual and polluted; prompted, directed, and circumscribed, by the appetites. Thus is by no means an imaginary representation: on the contrary, they are the observations of common experience: for how often have we seen and lamented, that the brightest natural parts have fallen a victim to pleasures, having been devoted to their service and command, till they have been gradually worn away, and have been utterly stupified and lost?

Here doubtless the libertine will be ready, with an air of triumph, to ask, where else is to be found that gaiety and sprightliness, that flow of mirth, and those sallies of wit, which enliven the conversation of the men of pleasure, beyond all that temperance and sobriety can pretend to? Does this argue the want or decay of parts; is it not rather a proof of their energy and vivacity? Be it so. But, alas! all this boasted fire is, in the scripture language, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot* (Eccles. vii. 6): so long as the fuel continues to be supplied, it may raise violent ebullitions; it may give a glaring light: but it is all the while raging, noisy, and self-consuming; it is a flame that is rather scorching than refreshing; and how soon is it extinguished, and leaves no remains but ashes! To quit the metaphor—This liveliness of wit, as it is called, is seldom rational, or reconcilable to good sense or decency: it is not the offspring of the understanding; and the passions themselves must be either vitiated or inflamed to have a relish for it. For what is it after all, but either the extravagance and phrenzy of an overheated fancy, or the offensive impurity of a debauched one? Is it the voice of that serene permanent joy which is in

the dwellings of the righteous ; the companion of wisdom and virtue ? Can it exist but in the midst of laughter and folly ? Or will it bear the review of one moment's cool reflection ? And when the raving of this fever-fit is over, does it not end in weariness, faintness and remorse ? So that, upon the whole, we have little reason either to envy or imitate the gayest and wittiest debaucheries of the men of pleasure ; though much it is to be feared, that some few pernicious examples in this kind have been the most prevailing inducements to unexperienced youth to run with an absurd emulation into the same excess of riot with themselves. But ought they not rather to be looked upon as so many lights to warn us of our danger, and prevent our splitting upon the rock, than to steer by in the course of life, if perchance there are some rare and illustrious instances of such uncommon talents, as a licentious and profligate life cannot easily get the better of ? It appears, they cannot indeed altogether extinguish them, they can only abuse and prostitute them ; prostitute those gifts which were bestowed upon them for the glory of God, and for the honour of human nature, even to the vilest purposes of obscenity, immorality, and profaneness. But is not this, in effect, the worst way of losing our understanding, thus infamously to degrade and disgrace it ?

This ascendancy of the appetites over our intellectual faculties generally brings on, sooner or later, the last and greatest injury they can receive, in the lowest and most scandalous prostitution of them ; namely, when all that remains of our reason is solely employed to cater for and pamper the appetites ; when it has lost all authority and rule, and is become the mere vile instrument of that blind impulse which it was born to govern, direct, and controul. Little do we deserve the name of reasonable creatures, when, by an unaccountable inversion of the order of nature, the appetites have at length, by continual encroachment, gained an absolute sovereignty, and the master is become the slave. Then when our reason is led captive of our lusts, no creature is less rational than man :

When the light which is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness ! Instead of order and harmony, and the peace of a regular self-government, the whole frame of our being is out of proportion, and what can be the effect of such anarchy but confusion, and every evil work ?

But this reflection suggests the latter part of my inquiry, namely, how an intemperate indulgence in sensual pleasures must affect a man in his moral and religious capacity.

I have already observed, that there may be an innocent and lawful, as well as an irregular and criminal gratification of the appetites ; and therefore, to assert with a stoical severity, that pleasure arising from the senses can have no possible intercourse or communion with the virtues, and that to think of introducing it as a companion to them, is *tanquam meretricem in matronarum catum adducere* (Cic. de Fin. lib. ii.), is neither serviceable to the cause of virtue, nor agreeable to reason and truth. On the contrary, the good providence of God has so disposed the general plan of this world, that, in order to subdue the natural desires to the interest of virtue, which has, in the ordinary appointment of things, the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come, men have never, upon the whole, so real and sincere an enjoyment of pleasures as when they are innocent. But then it must be allowed, that unless we use great circumspection, and are carefully upon our guard, they are extremely apt to become the baits and allurements to evil, and to seduce us gradually into a dissolute and irregular course of life, fatal to every moral virtue, and fruitful of almost every vice.

For when men, as in this case, becoming once habituated to take their estimate of good and evil from the mere animal sensations, (for vicious pleasures are as great corrupters of principles as of practice,) they have not in them the root and origin of virtue ; they have extinguished all moral taste, all relish of sublime and spiritual pleasures, without which it is impossible that any habit of virtue can fix itself in the soul. To become virtuous, we must find a pleasure in being so ; and every pleasure must have its

faculty of perception suited and adapted to it; and we are no more capable of moral pleasures without a virtuous disposition, than of animal gratifications without the senses. Or could a principle of virtue be supposed to subsist in the sensualist, how could it exert itself in action, or what possible employment could it find there? For what is the chief business of virtue but to discipline, controul, and govern the appetites and the animal passions, to assuage the violence of their current, and to deduce and gently lead them in their proper channels? But is a moderation of desires, is the government of the appetites, to be found in men whose very profession it is to inflame them? What! shall we look for abstemiousness in the drunkard, or for continence in the adulterer?

We may go on to observe, that a voluptuous life is not only at variance with every act of personal conduct and self-government, but is likewise found to have little fellowship or alliance with any kind or degree of social virtue. There is as natural a connection between the several sorts of the vices as of the virtues; and the gradation is as easy from the one to the other; so that we need not wonder, if those that have indulged themselves in the vices of concupiscence, should soon make the rest familiar to them. They that cannot regulate their appetites, will be as little able to govern the passions that are excited and inflamed by them; and when these, in each other's aid and assistance, demand to be gratified, what opposite principle shall we seek for to counteract and repress their united force? Shall we expect to find in the voluptuary the kind beneficent sentiments of humanity? No. Self-indulgence centers in itself; hates all avocation from pleasures; turns away its face from the sight of misery, or hardens itself to behold it without sympathy: it is not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, but it can abundantly create the distress which it cannot feel. Does he possess the useful virtues of the generous neighbour, or the disinterested ones of the faithful friend? On the contrary, where do we find, that the man inflamed with wine, or transported with lust, is at all apt to consider whom he

offends, or whom he injures; whose reputation he wounds, or whose peace he destroys; whose confidence he abuses, or whose innocence he betrays; what friendship he violates, or what enmities he creates? Nay, is he not frequently seen to break through the strongest ties, even of natural affection itself; for what degree of it can he be supposed to retain who abandons himself to vices which must certainly waste his fortune as well as his health, and too often entail upon his unhappy descendants infamy, poverty, and diseases? Or, in short, can he be in any respect a useful member of the community, when voluptuousness is so evidently destructive of all social happiness, as it eradicates all those virtues which are the support and strength of society, and ushers in all those vices which disorder, enfeeble, and, should they become epidemical, must dissolve it? For as industry and frugality are nursed by temperance, so a prostitution to pleasures engenders sloth and luxury, and must be fed by extravagance; and as that cannot long be supported by integrity and honesty, the great pillars of civil society will support itself by force and every act of injustice. *From whence says St. James, come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts?* (James, iv. 1.) And in the catalogue of the works of the flesh enumerated by St. Paul, to adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, succeed hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, envyings, murders. (Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.) And who hath we? says the Wise Man, who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt aim. (Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.)

Let us advance yet one step further, to see what ruin and desolation is made by an irregular indulgence in sensual pleasures in the highest attainment of man's nature, the Christian life. And if it has been made appear that such an indulgence does greatly enervate and corrupt the mind in its mere natural and moral state, how much more must it war against and wound the soul in its

spiritual one? A voluptuous life is a variance with the very essence of the Christian institution, the great end and design of which was to rescue us from the dominion of our lusts, to spiritualize our affections, and to purify our nature by the means of grace, that we might be vessels of honour, sanctified and prepared for glory. It is the first engagement we enter into upon our admission into the Christian covenant by baptism, "that we renounce all carnal desires of the flesh, so that we will not follow nor be led by them." The external rite is the emblem of purity, and by the inward operation of it we are dedicated as holy unto God: *Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost*, who cannot inhabit impurity and corruption. In consequence of this, the works of the flesh are constantly set in opposition to the works of the spirit; and the carnal mind is represented as enmity against God, *for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.* (Rom. viii. 7.) *For the flesh* (says the same apostle) *lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.* (Gal. v. 17.) So that there is no reconciling the profession of the spiritual religion of Christ with an indulgence in sensual lusts; as there is not a single Christian grace that can take root and grow in our hearts, unless they are first purified from all evil and corrupt affections, from every impure and inordinate desire: but, *if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work.* (3 Tim. ii. 21.) Prepared for the reception of every virtue and grace that can adorn the Christian in this life, and prepared for the exaltation and reward of them in a better. For indeed this purity of heart which our religion requires of us is no more than what is absolutely necessary to qualify us for heaven, and cannot be dispensed with from the very nature of the happiness that is there to be revealed. The kingdom of glory is a spiritual kingdom, and all the enjoyments of it are of a spiritual nature; and they who will be partakers of them must first endeavour to acquire a relish and savour

of things spiritual, and must begin their preparations for heaven by cultivating those graces which they shall exercise hereafter, and by restraining those appetites which can meet with no gratification there. It is a notion to which the light of nature carried several of the more exalted heathens, and which many eminent Christian writers have thought not disagreeable to the revealed notices of a future state, that the vicious inclinations which the soul contracts in the body through habits of lust and sensuality, and their consequent train of vices, do insinuate themselves into the very substance of the soul, and adhere to it, like a leprosy, in its separate state. In this light it appears, that the sensualist cannot partake of the joys of heaven, not only through an exclusion from them by a moral decree, but through an inability to taste them from a natural incapacity; and that, with all his depraved appetites about him, he could have no sense of the pleasures of heaven were he placed there. But however that may be, this is certain—that he will never be put to the trial. Whether the inclinations themselves subsist in the soul or not, we know at least the guilt which they communicate will inseparably cleave to it for ever; and no pollution will ever be admitted into the presence of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold impurity: he placeth before his throne those only that are in the white robes of righteousness; but neither drunkards, nor adulterers, nor fornicators, nor unclean persons, can have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

I have now gone through the several considerations I purposed to lay before you, in order to shew what fatal mischiefs and irretrievable ruin an intemperate pursuit of sensual pleasures brings upon the whole man, in every stage and condition of his being. And certainly they must have great weight with all that retain any sense of the dignity and perfection of human nature; that have any regard for their health and peace; for the regular enjoyment of their faculties; for the improvement of their understanding; for their increase in virtue; in short, that have any true relish for happiness in

this world, or expectation of bliss in that which is to come. These indeed are considerations of general concern, and affect all orders and degrees of men and of Christians. But there is something so peculiar in the circumstances of a learned and religious education, and the topics of this discourse may be applied with such singular propriety and force to those who have the advantages of it, that I shall entreat your patience and attention a little longer, while I make this special application, which, I trust, may prove as useful as it is apposite.

From a thorough insight into human nature, with a watchful eye and kind attention to the vanity and intemperate heat of youth, with well-weighed measures for the advancement of all useful literature, and the continual support and increase of virtue and piety, have the wise and religious instructors of the rules of conduct and government in places of education, done all that human prudence could do to promote the most excellent and beneficial design, by the most rational and well-concerned means. They first laid the foundation well, in the discipline and regulation of the appetites. They put them under the restraint of wholesome and frugal rules, to place them out of the reach of intemperance, and to preclude an excess that would serve only to corrupt, inflame, and torment them. They are fed with food convenient for them; with simplicity yet sufficiency; with a kind though cautious hand. By this means the seeds of vice are stifled in their birth; young persons are here removed from temptations, to which others, from a less happy situation, are too frequently exposed; and by an early habit of temperance and self-command they may learn either to prevent all irregular solicitations, or with ease to control them. Happy are they, who by a thankful enjoyment of these advantages, and a willing compliance with these rules, lay up in store for the rest of their life virtue, health, and peace!

Vain indeed would be the expectation of any real progress in intellectual and moral improvements, were not the foundation thus laid in strict regularity

and temperance; were the sensual appetites to be pampered in youth, or even vitiated with that degree of indulgence which an extravagant world may allow and call elegance, but in a place of education would be downright luxury. The taste of sensual pleasures must be checked and abated in them, that they may acquire a relish of the more sublime pleasures that result from reason and religion; that they may pursue them with effect, and enjoy them without avocation. And have they not in this place every motive, assistance, and encouragement, to engage them in a virtuous and moral life, and to animate them in the attainment of useful learning? What rank or condition of youth is there that has not daily and hourly opportunities of laying in supplies of knowledge and virtue, that will in every station of life be equally serviceable and ornamental to themselves, and beneficial to mankind?

And shall any one dare to convert this house of discipline and learning into a house of dissoluteness, extravagance, and riot? With what an aggravation of guilt do they load themselves, who at the same time that they are pursuing their own unhappiness, sacrilegiously break through all the fences of good order and government, and by their practice, seducement, and example, do what in them lies to introduce into these schools of frugality, sobriety, and temperance, all the mad vices and vain gaudies of a licentious and voluptuous age? What have they to answer for, who, while they profligately squander away that most precious part of time, which is the only season of application and improvement, to their own irretrievable loss, encourage one another in an idle and sensual course of life, and by spreading wide the contagion, reflect a scandal upon, and strive to bring into public disrepute, the place of their education, where industry, literature, virtue, decency, and whatever else is praise-worthy, did for ages flourish and abound? Is this the genuine fruit of the pious care of our ancestors for the security and propagation of religion and good manners to the latest posterity? Is this at last the reward of their munificence or does this conduct conduce for
of reconci-

their views, or with the just expectations and demands of your friends at your country?

Nor let any one vainly imagine, that the time and valuable opportunities, which are now lost, can hereafter be recalled at will; or that he, who has run out his youthful days in dissipation and pleasure, will have it in his power to stop when he pleases, and make a wiser use of his riper years. Yet this is too generally the fallacious hope that flatters the youth in his sensual indulgences, and leads him insensibly on in the treacherous ways of vice, till it is now too late to return. There are few who at one plunge so totally immerse in pleasures as to drown at once all power of reason and conscience. They promise themselves that they can indulge their appetites to such a point only, and can check and turn them back when they have run their allotted race. I do not indeed say that there never have been persons in whom the strong ferment of youthful lusts may have happily subsided, and who may have brought forth fruits of amendment, and displayed many eminent virtues. God forbid! that even the most licentious vices of youth should be absolutely incorrigible. But I may venture to affirm, that the instances in this case have been so rare, that it is very dangerous for any one to trust to the experiment upon a presumption that he shall add to the number. The only sure way to make any proficiency in a virtuous life is to set out in it betimes. It is then, when our inclinations are trained upon the way that they should lead us, that custom soon makes the best habits the most agreeable; the ways of wisdom become the ways of pleasantness, and every step we advance they grow more easy and more delightful. But on the contrary, when vicious headstrong appetites are to be reclaimed, and inveterate habits to be corrected, what security can we give ourselves that we shall have either inclination, resolution, or power, to stop, and turn back, and

recover the right way, from which we have so long and so widely wandered, and enter upon a new life, when perhaps our strength now faileth us, and we know not how near we may be to our journey's end?

These reflections I have suggested principally for the sake of those, who allowing themselves in greater indulgences than are consistent with a liberal and virtuous education, give evident proofs that they are not sufficiently aware of the dangerous encroachments and the peculiar deceitfulness of pleasurable sin. Happy for them! would they once seriously consider their ways; and no time can be more proper than when these solemn seasons of recollection and religious discipline should particularly dispose them to seriousness and thought. They would then discover, that though they are a while carried gently and supinely down the smooth stream of pleasure, yet soon the torrent will grow too violent to be stemmed; the waves will arise, and dash them upon rocks, or sink them in whirlpools. It is therefore the part of prudence to stop short while they may; and to divert their course into a different channel, which, whatever obstructions and difficulties they may labour with at first, will every day become more practicable and pleasing, and will assuredly carry them to a serene and secure haven. But if neither the apprehension of the dangers, anxieties, and miseries, that are the sure attendants upon vice and voluptuousness in this life, can awaken their fears; nor the assurance of that calm self-possession, that regular enjoyment of all the faculties of body and mind, that health, peace, and joy, which are the associates of temperance and virtue, can win upon their inclinations; then--*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee, in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.* (Eccles. xi. 9.)

SERMON LXXII.

By Dr. TOTTIE.

The Excellency of the Christian Morality.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at Christ Church, Nov. 15, 1761.]

PHIL. iv. 8.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

THE apostle has here given us in one view, a complete and beautiful system of the Christian morality. Such is the propriety and extent of the words he has made use of, as to express every essential virtue, and every ornamental grace. Not only the things that are true, and honest, and just, and pure, are recommended to us, but those likewise that are lovely and of good report. *If there be any virtue*—that we are to think upon and contemplate; to esteem and value it highly, and to fix it in our minds. But this, it seems, is not sufficient; we must go on to greater perfection; and *if there be any praise*; *Si quid cum virtute conjunctum, et laudabile est*, says Castalio upon the place: if there be any thing truly laudable, that is connected with virtue, and renders it amiable and graceful in the eyes of men—that likewise must be the object of our contemplation and pursuit.

In order to shew the extent and perfection of the Christian morals, I shall first inquire into the general nature of the virtues recited in my text:

And, secondly, I shall consider them under the advantages of that cultivation and improvement, which the apostle recommends.

Upon a critical view of the passage before us, we shall find that St. Paul first introduces to our notice the general principle of virtue; and then proceeds to a perfect and distinct enumeration of the several species of it, with that accu-

which a careful and judicious reader may always discover in his writings. An examination into the sense of the words he makes use of, in the order in which they lie, will shew the justness of this remark.

First, then; whatsoever things are true, these we are to think upon, and implant in our minds, as the fixed principles of our conduct. Truth is the great foundation and test of morality. For which reason, we find in the most ancient writers, both sacred and profane, that it is a comprehensive name for the whole system of virtue; and a lie is often used as an equivalent term to vice. When the old heathen moralists would recommend a right and virtuous conduct, they advise men to pay the same regard to truth in actions as in words; to live a life of truth; to be no more guilty of a lie in practice than in conversation. And the scriptures speak the same kind of language. In them, the great Creator himself is styled the God of truth; and his law is the truth. The Saviour of the world, who came to teach men the perfect will of God, calls himself *the truth and the life*: his divine doctrine is, through the whole New Testament, called *the truth as it is in Jesus*; *the word of truth*; *the way of truth*; and *truth itself*. And, on the contrary, the wicked one, the original author of all evil principles and practices, is intitled the father of lies.

And there is a strict propriety in this kind of language. For all the moral virtues are of eternal truth and goodness, correspondent to the immutable nature and perfections of God, and invariable as the origin from which they are derived. And therefore it is certain, we may as well contradict the truth of things in practice, as deny it in speculation. Thus, for instance, if I neglect to pay any homage to God, and live in a presumptuous violation of his laws, is it not, in effect, to declare, that I, a dependent creature, owe him neither submission or obedience? which is absolutely false. If I refuse to acknowledge his mercies in the redemption of mankind by Christ Jesus, is it not the same thing as to say, that I wanted no assurance of pardon for my transgressions, no means of reconcil-

liation to my offended God; or that I had no need of an instructor or an assistant to lead me in the way of life? both which presumptions are undoubtedly contrary to truth: and as in these instances we disclaim the general principles of natural or revealed religion, so by every immoral action we contradict some particular truth. If I am guilty of injustice, I disallow the fixed maxim of equity, *in not doing to others, what I would they should do to me*. If I am ungrateful to my benefactor, I deny that kindness deserves a requital; and if I am intemperate and voluptuous, I plainly declare, that there is no occasion for the appetites to be under the controul and guidance of the superior faculty of reason. In short, whenever we deviate from virtue, we adopt some false principle or maxim, as the governing rule of our actions in that instance; whereas truth is the one invariable standard, to which we are obliged to conform, by making the course of our life and manners correspondent to the will of God; suitable to that state and order of things which he has constituted in nature; and agreeable to our own frame and situation, to the relation we bear, and the various obligations we are under, to other beings. Thus we see, that virtue in general consists in the conformity of our actions to truth; and that St. Paul has prescribed to us an universal rule of life, taking in the whole compass of our moral conduct, when he says, *whatsoever things are true, think on these things*.

But he thought it not sufficient to define virtue in its general nature only; to give us a more distinct idea of it, he proceeds to recount its several species by a perfect and exact enumeration. These are comprehended in the following expressions: *whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure*.

The term honest in this place, though you allow it the same force as the Latin *honestum*, is very far from reaching the sense of the original word *σεμνός*, which is rendered in the margin of our bibles, with much more propriety, venerable: nor does even this word, in our language, come up to the full meaning of the original, unless you include in it the notion

of what is sacred, on account of its relation to God. The root, whose signification it retains, properly imports an act of religious worship. *σεμνίον*, a word of the same origin, signifies the holy place where religious mysteries were celebrated. And a few instances will serve to shew that this sense is by no means foreign to the derivative of my text. The author of the second book of Maccabees expresses by it the majesty and sanctity of the temple: he uses it likewise as descriptive of the sabbath, calling it the most sacred day: he gives it as an epithet to their venerable and holy laws: and he ascribes it to God, as an attribute of his most holy and glorious name. To the same sense it is applied by the primitive ecclesiastical writers. One instance among many may serve for an example. Clement of Alexandria, speaking of image worship, condemns the practice of it for this reason, because it infringes *τὴν σεμνότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ*; it is an encroachment upon the venerability of the Deity. From this use and sense of the original word, the precept of St. Paul will appear to have this meaning:—*Whatsoever is truly reverend and sacred, whatsoever, as such, is the proper object of your veneration, think on these things*.

Under this head therefore must, in a particular manner, be included all the duties we owe to God, all the offices of piety and religious worship. These necessarily arise from a contemplation of the adorable perfections of that infinite Being, who will for ever be the object of the highest degree of veneration to all rational creatures in the universe. A relative and subordinate veneration has likewise been paid in all ages and countries to every thing that has a connection with divine worship; for which reason, places and things dedicated to the service of God have always been esteemed sacred. *οἱ διακόνες ὡσαύτως εἶναι σεμνοὶ*: the ministers of the gospel are to remember, that they likewise have a sacred and reverend character to support. When we are called upon therefore to think upon whatsoever things are venerable, we are excited especially to form in our minds the most awful sentiments of the majesty of God, and not

to be wanting in the homage and duty we owe to him, in veneration of what belongs to him, or in any expressions of reverence in the performance of our religious adoration.

The apostle having thus secured our regard to the first class of moral duties, namely, such as we owe to God, he proceeds next to recommend those that are due to men—*Whatsoever things are just, think on these things.*—By this expression he denotes the general principles of justice and equity; and the offices that flow from these are of great variety and extent. An exact and scrupulous regard to the rights of others, with a deliberate and fixed purpose to preserve them upon all occasions inviolate, wherein the essence of justice consists, secures the practice of the whole system of social virtues. For the rights of men exact from us whatever they have a just and reasonable claim to in their persons, properties, and characters. It is a very low and imperfect kind of justice, merely to abstain from injuries.

We must be active in the exercise of this virtue; as occasions and circumstances require, we must be just to the merits of men by commendation and favour: we must be just to their necessities by charitable relief: we must be just to their infirmities by candour and humanity. In short, the exercise of justice does not only exclude oppression and fraud, and the grosser kinds of iniquity, but it is inconsistent likewise with rigour and severity in the pursuit of our legal demands; with envious competitions, and undermining arts; with slander, detraction, and censoriousness; and with every thing that betrays a malevolent and ungenerous spirit. So that when St. Paul recommends to us *whatsoever things are just*, he recommends the practice of every virtue, that men can exercise towards each other, that has any tendency to establish or promote the welfare, regularity, or happiness of society.

The remaining branch of moral virtue produces such as regard ourselves: and these are contained in the expression, *whatsoever things are pure.* This word, perhaps, in its strict and primary sense, may be confined to the virtues of conti-

nence and chastity; but we may extend its signification farther, so as to import a strict abstinence from all such polluted pleasures as are contrary to temperance in general: from all irregular gratifications whatsoever of the sensual appetites. For all irrational and base indulgences of this kind spread a defilement and taint over the soul, by enslaving it to gross conceptions, and blotting it with the traces of foul desires, and by that means rendering it utterly incapable of refinement for any intellectual and spiritual employment. The scriptures always speak of them in such a manner, as to shew, that whatever is contrary to a life of temperance, sobriety, and chastity, is pollution. Sensuality of every kind turns the man into the brute: it destroys the purity and sanctity of the rational nature; it profanes the temple of the Holy Ghost, and actually disqualifies us from rising to that exalted state of happiness in heaven, where nothing that defileth can make its approach.

St. Paul having thus far recommended to us the contemplation and pursuit of virtue, first under the character of its general nature, and then in the accurate distribution of it into its three great branches of piety, justice, and temperance; he proceeds, in the next place, to carry our virtues to their greatest improvement and perfection, by prescribing to us the cultivation of every thing that has a connection with them, so as to render them amiable and reputable: *Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—think on these things.* As if he had said—Pursue virtue upon its right principle; admit nothing into your practice but what is consistent with truth: and follow this, where it leads you, through the comprehensive division of the duties you owe to God, to men, and to yourselves. But be careful, at the same time, that you discharge these duties in such a manner as to throw a light upon your good works, adding grace to your virtues, and making them, as much as possible, the object of imitation and praise.

This is by no means an unnecessary addition to virtue; as will plainly appear,
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if we reflect upon the very different appearances it assumes from the manner in which it is practised. It is this which makes as great a distinction in moral behaviour as in civil; so that actions, founded on the same principle, shall in one view make virtue desirable and lovely, inviting the public regard; and in another, shall make it unamiable and distasteful, deterring men from the pursuit of it, and forbidding them to embrace it.

How venerable, for instance, is the appearance of rational and manly piety, manifesting the inward sentiments of the heart in the performance of religious adoration, by decent gesture, by a composed and serious deportment, by looks full of affiance, gratitude, and affection, where fervour is tempered with sobriety, and confidence with humility! Very different from this is the indolent and unanimated demeanour of some, and the enthusiastic air of others, who, though both may possibly have their thoughts fixed upon heaven, yet certainly they neither of them contribute to make the beauty of holiness apparent in the public worship of God, but rather deaden or distort the genuine features of piety, by neglecting or overstraining the forms of it.

The case is the same with respect to the social virtues, which are very ill recommended by a cynical moroseness, or a stoical inflexibility. In what a different light are liberality and generosity seen, when the manner of conferring the benefaction shall either double the kindness, or shall make the person obliged out of humour, and almost unthankful for the favour he receives? Sincerity scarce appears to be the same virtue, when it expresses itself with an unbecoming freedom or an unguarded bluntness of speech, regarding neither persons nor seasons; and when it maintains the same regard to truth, with a civility and decency in words and actions. In short, we always do an injury to virtue, when we do not clothe it in a becoming dress, and give it all the advantages and lustre it is capable of receiving. Nay, in truth, we take away from its very essence, and hinder every good action from being the *res integra* that it ought to be, whenever we suffer

any thing heterogeneous or disagreeable to its nature to be mixed with it. No man therefore should be contented with himself as a real lover and practiser of virtue, unless he aims to excel in virtue; which he cannot do, unless he makes a good life a graceful one, and performs every right action in the best and most becoming manner.

Tully, in his *Book of Offices*, is very particular in his observations upon the *honestum et decorum*; for this reason, because there is no time or situation of life, which has not a correspondent duty belonging to it; nor is there a duty without a certain decency accompanying it, by which every virtue it is joined to will appear to be doubled. And he recommends the same harmonious exactness in the conduct of human life, as is required in musical compositions. In these, not only the grosser discords are avoided, but the least dissonance that would be offensive to the nicest ear. And therefore, says he, be careful to preserve the most minute accuracy and proportion in moral behaviour, as harmony in actions is much more excellent than in sounds.

The book of Proverbs and that of Ecclesiasticus abound with precepts and observations regarding these lesser moralities, as they have been called, but without which the greater ones cannot be complete. Rules of prudence and decorum are intermixed therein with those of the most essential duties; and wherever they are uniformly put in practice, the former will be a support and ornament to the latter, and will dignify and recommend the character of the moral and religious man.

Of the same kind likewise are those precepts of the New Testament, which require our behaviour to be such as *becometh* (or is ornamental to) *godliness*; which enjoins us to *abstain from all appearance of evil—not to let our good be evil-spoken of—to have our conversation honest—and, to provide things honest (καλὰ, beautiful) in the sight of all men*. These and such like passages plainly suppose, that even good actions may be performed in such a manner, as not only to lose that engaging lustre which should make them appear lovely,

and entitle them to reputation and praise, but even so as to give offence. And the same decorum which must be observed, if we would give a beauty and perfection to our moral conduct, St. Paul likewise extends to our conversation; *let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.* It is by this exactness of behaviour, governed by propriety and decency, as well as duty, that we obey the same apostle's command, in *approving the things that are excellent*, and in *seeking to excel*: and by this we *adorn*, as it becomes us to do, *the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; we arrive at that degree of Christian perfection required of us, as not only to be *blameless and harmless, without rebuke*, but to *shine as lights in the world*. For it is not enough for us to be innocent; we must likewise be exemplary: and virtue can never effectually recommend itself to imitation, unless it is *lovely and of good report*.

Indeed many great things have been very truly said of the native beauty and intrinsic charms of virtue; but it is meant when they are properly displayed. For these certainly will appear to greater or less advantage, from the different light she is shewn in, and the dress that she wears. The more amiable and the fairer she is in her own genuine features and complexion, the more careful should we be to keep her clear from every blemish that will for that reason be the more visible, and will give the greater disgust. Certainly she loses much by a negligent and slovenly appearance; and she is disfigured by the trappings that affectation gives her; but it is no inconsiderable improvement that she receives from the neat and graceful attire she puts on, when decency is her handmaid.

Thus have I endeavoured to deduce from the words of my text the plan of Christian morality, which is constituted by the apostle upon the eternal and immutable foundation of truth; and is expanded by him into the various branches that produce the virtues of every different species in their full extent, and under all the advantages they are capable of receiving from every thing that has an alliance with virtue, that can make it desirable and lovely in the eyes

of men, the object of imitation and praise.

But wherein, you will say, does the Christian morality differ from the Pagan morality? Have not the heathen writers built theirs upon the same foundation? Have they not distinguished the several duties of it in the same manner? And have they not very strongly recommended that decorum of actions, which is so necessary to make virtue amiable? It is allowed, they have done all this: and yet the Christian morality may very justly claim the preference. The heathen sages laid their foundation well, when they established moral virtue upon truth. They would have done still better, could they have told us what truth was, and where it was to be found. But this they could not do, because they never discovered it themselves in many points of the greatest importance. They were shamefully ignorant in the first principle and ground-work of all morality. For it is certain, that the best and wisest of them never arrived at such true notions of the Deity, as to think idolatrous worship unlawful. They offered sacrifices to false gods, according to the rites of their country, and were all idolaters—I do not except the great Socrates himself—they were all idolaters to a man. One sect of philosophers, of which many who had the greatest influence of power and authority professed themselves to be, absolutely rejected the providence of God: and those who allowed it, seem to have had but very dark and contracted notions of its real operation and constant interposition in all human events. Their notions of morality were likewise in other respects very imperfect or erroneous. Conceit and pride, angry disputation and envious competition, and a furious contention for victory rather than truth, were virtues among the learned in the heathen world; whilst those of meekness and humility, so ornamental to human nature, and so agreeable to the condition of it, had no place either in their systems or their practice. On the contrary, a quick sense and resentment of injuries, and even a spirit of revenge, if not carried into execution by any mean and base methods, were deemed the marks of a noble mind.

And in some cases and persons, that sacrilegious impiety of self-murder was applauded as the most heroical action. Then as to the vices of impurity; it is amazing, how licentious they were both in principle and practice, to the disgrace of human nature. Even the great Athenian legislator, when he restrained only the slaves of his community from the commission of the most unnatural and abominable of all vices, virtually permitted a free indulgence in it to the citizens, and established this great iniquity by law.

Very different from this is the truth, as it is in Jesus. He modelled his system of morality by the invariable standard of truth—the perfect will of God. By making this fully known to us, he has secured the worship of the one true God upon the basis of a rational piety, *in spirit and in truth*. He hath comforted and sustained us by the assurance of our being, every moment of our lives, under the kind and constant care of God's watchful providence; *without whose notice not a sparrow falleth unto the ground*, and by whom *the hairs of our head are all numbered*. He hath taught us to extend our benevolence to enemies, as well as friends; to submit ourselves one to another; and to give the honour that is due to all men. He has laboured to inspire his disciples with the most perfect and exalted charity towards one another; a love that reaches to heaven as well as earth, and is the beginning of an eternal union, which neither death nor time can dissolve. Nor is there any virtue that can contribute to the real happiness of society, or to the inward peace and tranquillity of our own minds, that does not make a part of his divine religion. Resignation, contentment, humility, forgiveness, forbearance, meekness, gentleness, and goodness; every ornament of a quiet and inoffensive, unoffended spirit, is taken into the Christian morals. They give a perfection to every other virtue that can be named, and refine all the duties we owe to God,

to man, and to ourselves. And hence we may observe, that the becoming and pleasing gracefulness of the good Christian's demeanour is not acquired from rules of decorum, that reach only to outward appearances, and teach the art of behaviour; but it springs from the very spirit of his religion, and grows upon the mild and gentle virtues that are peculiar to it as its natural fruit.

There is yet one thing more to be added, that must shew the perfection and sublimity of the Christian scheme of morality above any other, which is, that it has a respect to man, not merely as an inhabitant of this world, but as a citizen of heaven. It is for this reason, that it takes in many virtues as essential and ornamental to the Christian life, which were very little esteemed by the most moral heathens. Nor indeed could it be expected, that such virtues as consist in a generous disregard and contempt for the things of this world; in the mortification of our appetites; in the forgiveness of injuries upon a principle of religion, and many others, should be adopted by those, whose languid and uncertain hopes in a future state, left them too much under the influence of an attachment to the honours, riches, or pleasures, of this present life. Whereas the sure prospect of eternity, that animates every sincere believer in Christ, not only shews the reasonableness and propriety of those virtues, but makes them practicable, easy, and delightful. The contemplation of the infinite mercy and love of God, so eminently displayed to him in his redemption, carries him with irresistible motives to the practice of every moral duty, and every Christian grace, that can purify his nature, and refine his manners; so as to make him a fit companion for angels and glorified saints in heaven, where the beauty of holiness is perfect without spot or blemish, and its everlasting happiness as complete as the presence of God can make it.

SERMON LXXIII.

By Dr. TOTTIE.

The Reality and Efficacy of the ordinary Operations of the Holy Spirit.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at Christ Church, June 1, 1766.]

JOHN, iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

It has been observed, that there is something obscure, and seemingly abrupt in the conversation which our blessed Lord held with Nicodemus, as related in this chapter. But if we can discover the intention of this eminent Pharisee in coming to our Lord, the obscurity will probably vanish, and the connection of this whole discourse, with the declaration that occasioned it, will be evident. We may reasonably suppose, that it was not a vain curiosity, but a serious desire of getting information in a matter of real importance, that induced Nicodemus to pay this secret and cautious visit. At the first interview, this ruler of the Jews, this member of the great sanhedrim, or council, bears an honest testimony to the reality and greatness of our Saviour's miracles, as a thing indisputable; and he proceeds to draw the necessary conclusion arising from those miracles—*that he must be a teacher come from God.* You see, he acknowledges him to be a prophet; and the general expectation which prevailed at this time of the coming of that great one, together with the evidence of such mighty works, might naturally incline him to suspect that Jesus was the person. But he came, doubtless, with the prejudices of his countrymen about him; and could not discover those marks of royalty, which they imagined would peculiarly distinguish their great deliverer, who was to *restore the kingdom unto Israel.* Our Saviour seems to understand him, as if he meant to put the same question to

him, under this uncertainty of mind, as was asked by John's disciples—*Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* He does not indeed satisfy him as to this point directly, but endeavours to enable him to give an answer to himself, by explaining to him the spiritual nature of that kingdom he was going to erect. And, at the same time, he expresses his surprise, that a master of Israel should want to be informed, that a more plentiful effusion of the divine spirit was to be a characteristic of the Messiah's reign. *Except a man, saith he, be born again, he cannot see, he can neither discern nor be partaker of, the kingdom of God.* The Pharisee misunderstanding the expression of *being born again*, our Saviour thus explains it to him: *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit*, except he be born again, or hath his nature renewed by that cleansing spirit which washeth and purifieth from sin, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; that kingdom which is begun in this world by virtue, righteousness, and peace, and will be completed in the next by perfect holiness and happiness. He goes on to this effect: Mistake me not; I speak not of a natural birth, but a spiritual one; *for that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, frail and perishing, subject to dissolution and death; *but that which is born of the spirit is spirit*, of heavenly extraction, the immediate creature of God, and heir of immortality. I see you marvel at this, and want to be instructed in the manner of this new birth. It is very discernible in its effects, though the cause is not seen: that aerial spirit, called the wind, will illustrate to you the working of the true divine spirit: *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Thou perceivest the gentle murmurs and breathings of the wind; thou feelest the refreshment of it; thou knowest its salutary influence, that it keeps the air sweet, and purges it from noxious and putrifying vapours: but in what manner its motion begins, what progress it takes, how, and when, and where, it arises and subsides, that thou

knowest not, and canst not explain. The same kind of operation hath the Spirit of God. The inspiration of it flows like the soft and warm breezes of the air : it refreshes the soul with peaceful and pleasing thoughts ; it keeps the conscience pure and undefiled, and preserves it from the pestilential contagion of sin. All this may be perceived and felt ; but in what way the influences of the Spirit are derived to men ; how the workings of it begin in the mind ; or to what height and force they may arise ; how far it may carry them with a prosperous gale, or where it may cease and expire ; the author of it best knows, but thou canst not discover. But though we know not the manner and extent of the operation, we may with certainty find out the cause : we may know by the effects what the cause is ; for whether it be in the natural or spiritual world, the primary and never-ceasing cause of every good production is God.

In this text of scripture, which I have commented upon, it was our Saviour's design to give an illustration of the ordinary agency and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; for it represents the state of every one that is born of the Spirit ; of every regenerate person or true believer. When the extraordinary gifts of the same Divine Spirit were poured, on the day of Pentecost, upon the apostles, they were attended with a *rushing mighty wind, which filled the place where they sat*. In this case, the gifts themselves being of an uncommon nature, the manner of their communication was so too. But, in the ordinary dispensations of grace, there is no alarming demonstration of it from without, and every thing within is calm and quiet. And therefore the operation of it is compared to the gentle spirations of the air ; for the original word, where there is no adjunct expressive of force, does not properly denote its violent and tempestuous commotions.

It will be the business, then, of this discourse, to treat of the ordinary operations and gifts of the Holy Spirit of God ; and, in doing this, I shall,

First, Shew the reality and efficacy of them ; and then I shall add some observations that may be of use in the consideration of this subject.

The inquiry, you will observe, is not how, or with what manner of agency, the Spirit of God works upon our spirit, but whether it does really work upon it or not. The connection between causes and effects is often visible and certain, where we are totally ignorant of the operation of the one, or the production of the other. This is universally the case in all the appearances of nature. We know the natural principles that produce vegetation ; but how they produce it we cannot comprehend or explain. We know that light gives form and colour to the creation, and that sounds are conveyed by the vibrations of the air ; but how they occasion these different sensations, reason and learning are at a loss to account for. We know, by the most certain experience of what passes within ourselves, that the mind acts upon the body, and the body upon the mind, and yet philosophy will not take upon itself to give us any conception how either of these acts upon the other. And why may not spirit act upon spirit, as well as upon body ? Nor can it be any objection to the reality of this action, that we are ignorant how it is performed. And surely the Spirit of God may act upon the spirit of man, though the mode of his operation in the spiritual as well as the material world may be very remote from our conception. In truth, it is altogether as unphilosophical as it is irreligious, to imagine that the universal Infinite Spirit, which created all things, which sustains all things, and which is as intimately present to every being as that being is to itself, cannot, or does not, influence, direct, impel, or controul, according to the purposes of his own divine providence, every creature of his own, *which only lives, and moves, and has his being in him*.

None of the wiser heathens have ever called in question the possibility of the agency of the Divine Spirit upon the human mind ; and some of the virtuous ones have acknowledged its reality in the direction of their thoughts and inclinations. The patriarchs before the law, and the prophets under the law, had communications of it in an extraordinary manner ; and they likewise professed

their dependence upon it as their ordinary guide and support. But, under the dispensation of the gospel, the gifts and graces of it are shed abroad in a more diffusive manner; they are imparted to every sincere believer in Christ, nor can any man be a real Christian, who has not an intimate union with this heavenly companion. The declarations of the scriptures upon this point are so frequent, determinate, and clear, as to leave no room for doubt or mistake. The true Christian, you will there find, from the beginning to the end of his conversation, is led by the hand of God; is assisted, guided, and forwarded, in all his thoughts and actions, by his Holy Spirit; he advances by the power of grace to the kingdom of glory, and can make no progress in his journey, any farther than he is conducted, animated, and supported by this divine comforter and assistant.

Let us proceed to consider more particularly the efficacy of this spirit of grace; and we shall find, that its operations are directed to such purposes as are most necessary for our condition, and most conducive to our happiness. The state of the natural unregenerate man is represented in scripture to be a state of enmity with God. And the causes assigned for his being alienated from God are, the ignorance that is in him, and wicked works. His understanding being darkened and perverted, he does not sufficiently apprehend and consider the law that is to direct his conduct, nor attend to the obligations of it; and his passions and appetites being unsubdued, he is led captive by them, and made a slave to sin, even against the knowledge which he has, and under the condemnation of his own mind. In this unhappy state, the Spirit of God is graciously pleased to interpose, and converts him as it were, into a new creature, by enlightening his understanding, and reducing his affections into due subjection and order. I shall enlarge upon each of these points.

It is evident from fact, that human reason, under its best cultivation and improvement, was never able to arrive at a complete knowledge of the perfect law of God. This knowledge has, however, been graciously communicated to the

world by the extraordinary manifestation of the Divine Spirit, which inspired the teachers of Christianity with wisdom and understanding, to declare the whole counsel of God in the redemption of mankind, and which bore a divine testimony to the truth of their doctrines by many wonderful works. But this revelation never had, nor ever can have, any salutary effect but upon minds prepared to receive it. And the operation of the same Divine Spirit is still necessary to enlarge and qualify our understanding for the discernment of spiritual truths, and of the excellency of the gospel of Christ: it is necessary to dispel those clouds of ignorance and prejudice that intercept the view of heavenly objects, and to correct that pride and self-sufficiency, which, by making us wise in our own conceits, more effectually fortifies us in error. At the publication of the gospel, not many wise men, not many learned, were called to the profession of it. Their wisdom and learning were a bar to their conversion, which could not take place, so long as it depended upon reasoning from their own principles. For the cross of Christ was a *stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks*; and nothing but the special grace of God, imparted by his Spirit, could extinguish those false lights which misled them in their search after truth, and opened their understanding to the perception of the power and wisdom of God. The same pride of an unenlightened understanding, refusing and setting at nought the assistance and direction of this divine counsellor, will always disqualify it from making any progress in religious knowledge, and will render the best natural intellectual abilities not only useless to the possessors of them, but in the highest degree mischievous to themselves and to mankind. Of this a late dogmatical writer will furnish us with a striking example. The natural powers of his understanding seem to have been of superior growth and strength; these were enlarged by an extensive knowledge of philosophy, history, and mankind; and this knowledge has been communicated to the world with great force of language and confidence of ^{assent} to us. And where have these great ^{object}...

carried him? Even into the very dregs and sink of atheism.—“To ascribe to God the moral attributes of holiness, justice, and goodness, is, with him, enthusiasm and blasphemy; that God exercises any special providence over his creatures, or has any regard to the events that befall individuals, is folly to believe; that man should survive his dissolution by death, and that there is, on the other side of the grave, a future state of retribution, is an idle tale, which has no real foundation in nature or reason.” Had the least ray of the Divine Spirit enlightened the understanding of this daring writer, could he possibly have prostituted it to the contrivance and support of a wretched system of such abominable and exploded absurdities as these? In instances of this nature, we see that the pride of reason, which disdains to submit to be directed by the light of Heaven and the admonitions of grace, prevents its apprehension of the most clear and evident truths, even of natural religion; much less will it suffer itself to embrace those divine truths which are made known by revelation only. Great reason, therefore, had St. Paul to pray, as he often prays in behalf of his converts, *that God would enlighten their minds and understanding; that he would increase their knowledge; that he would give them a right judgment in all things.*

And here I shall just stop to observe, that the apostle is so far from denying men the use of their reason in religious matters, that he prays for the improvement of its faculties for their greater proficiency in them; knowing, that they will see farther and better into the things pertaining to their salvation, if it shall please God to give them a sober understanding, to increase their portion of it, to assist them in the exercise and application of it, and dispose them to delight in the attainment of religious knowledge. And I must further observe, that Christianity is so far from declining an appeal to reason, in the examination of its proofs and doctrines, that it requires the most perfect and unbiassed exercise of it, to know its nature and value: and where the mind is most enlightened, the communications of real knowledge most extensive, and judgment most discerning, there

it will always be best understood, and most willingly embraced,

But I proceed to consider the operations of the Spirit, as they are concerned in the regulation of the passions and appetites. Now the Spirit of God influences the mind of man, not only by giving light to the understanding, by restraining it within the proper limits of its powers, by directing its application to the pursuit of religious knowledge, and by giving it that steadiness and complacency which arises from a well-grounded conviction of the truth, importance, and excellence of the gospel of Christ; but it likewise gives vigour to its authority, by reducing the inferior faculties, which are so apt to disturb its operations, into due subordination and obedience; it bends the will and subdues the affections to submit to its commands. This St. Paul, in his description of the unregenerate Jew or heathen, in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, represents to be a thing impossible to be done by the mere powers of nature; and even a Christian must have been trained up and practised in the discipline of the gospel, and, through the constant supplies and increase of grace, must have made great progress in his profession, before he can put his reason in quiet possession of its dominion, and reduce his irregular passions to pay a ready obedience to it without pain or reluctance. In the case both of the unregenerate heathen and undisciplined Christian, the law of righteousness arising from the will of God is supposed; and that the understanding is capable of discovering the excellency and obligation of it, though in different degrees. But the misfortune is, that the actions of men are not always regulated by the conviction of the understanding. The passions and sensual appetites overbear its authority, and despise its commands; and man pays an obedience to the law of sin, at the very time that he disapproves and condemns it in his own conscience. He owns the authority of his true and natural Lord, and yet pays obedience to an usurper and a tyrant. He knows the commands of the one to be reasonable, and subjection to his rule and government to be honourable; this

subjection he refuses to pay, and at the same time submits to the arbitrary and debasing sway of the most cruel master. He approves the law which he violates, and obeys the law which he condemns. Captivated and enthralled by his lusts, he rebels against his own reason and understanding, and all the while that he is the slave of sin, he is the approver and admirer of virtue. There cannot be a state of more complete and miserable servitude than this. And what can deliver us from this wretched captivity? Nothing can do this but the mercy of God, vouchsafed to us through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and the effectual assistance of his Holy Spirit, which alone can give us the victory in this unequal contest. Accordingly, by the mighty power of the Spirit of life, the complete and real Christian is represented to be made free from the law of sin and death. There is no longer any conflict between the law of his mind and the law in his members. Passion and appetite are contented to pay due homage and obedience to the superior faculty of the understanding; they aim not to force or to seduce it to rebel against duty. All the powers within him act in their proper sphere and regular order. He knows the will of God, and it is his comfort and delight to obey it. He walks uniformly on in the ways of virtue and peace, without disturbance or weariness, and safely arrives at his journey's end, with the near prospect of immortality before him.

Now, if the unregenerate heathen, when destitute of the divine grace, and the imperfect Christian, who undervalues and rejects its aid, cannot pay a due obedience to the law of righteousness, though they own its authority, and approve its excellence; and if the same persons, when converted to a truly Christian life, are enabled, by that assistance, only to pay such a regular obedience to the law of God, as will be accepted by him, and will be rewarded with eternal happiness; then it is plain, that to order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, which are our great seducers, and carry us astray from our duty, is strictly and properly the work of the Spirit of God; and that all our proficiency in

goodness is as much owing to his grace, as the reward of our obedience is to his mercy.

The scriptures have not only given us a general assurance of the operation and influence of this Divine Spirit, both upon the understanding and affections, but they have moreover specified various particulars, wherein he has engaged and promised his assistance, if we are willing to receive this heavenly guest into our hearts, to listen to his silent admonitions, and to be directed by his wholesome counsels. He will further us in all our religious undertakings; will settle us in the true knowledge and faith of Christ; will lift up our thoughts and desires to Heaven; will help our devotion, and give wings to our prayers. He will direct us in our doubts; comfort us in our afflictions; support us in our troubles; fortify us against temptations; give us strength and courage in trials and persecutions; and will arm us against the fear of death. Where he finds a ready disposition to receive him, and an honest and upright heart, he will come, and will make his abode with us, and will be our companion, our guard, our comforter. We shall feel and confess the enlivening presence of this Holy Spirit in the peace of conscience, in an unruffled composure and serenity of mind, in having a delight in virtue, in the possession of all those Christian graces that purify and refine the soul, in the assurance of God's favour, and in hopes full of immortality. These are the blessed effects which the scriptures, in various passages, attribute to the Holy Spirit of God; and these effects the pious and good Christian, who is led by the Spirit, does, according to the measure and proportion of it, most undoubtedly feel. And although he may not be at all times equally sensible of his presence and consolation, yet, so long as he continues in the fear and love of God, and the regular practice of his duty, he may be assured that this divine guide has his residence still with him, and that he will not leave him nor forsake him.

It now remains that I make an observation or two, that may be of use to us in the consideration of this subject.

And first, I observe, that the operations of the divine grace are consistent with the free exercise of our own natural faculties. God having given us understanding and freedom of will, deals with us, in the communication of his Spirit, as rational and free agents; and whatever additional strength he may give us in the use of our faculties, he does not supersede the faculties themselves, nor take away the use of them. Because *God worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, is no reason why we should sit still in a state of indolence and quietism, and do nothing for ourselves; but it is the very reason given by the apostle, why we should endeavour *to work out our own salvation*. If our minds are enlightened, our knowledge increased, and our judgment corrected by the Spirit of God, he designs, no doubt, that we should make a proper use of these advantages, and bend the whole force of our understanding thus improved, to make the divine law our incitation and study, and to advance in that knowledge, which will make us wise unto salvation. If he puts the reins of our passions and appetites into our hands, it is with an intention that we should make use of them; and if he gives us an inward conviction, that all his laws are holy, and just, and good; if he makes our obedience to them practicable and easy, and annexes to the regular performance of our duty that delight and joy which the good Christian only can feel, and the spirit of consolation inspire; then, doubtless, he gives us this assistance and encouragement, not to make us careless and remiss in running the race that is set before us, but to call forth all our powers, under the animating confidence, that the strength which we want the Spirit of Grace will supply. And there cannot be a stronger motive to induce us to summon the little strength that we have, and to set forward, with all our might, in the way that leadeth unto life, than the assurance that we can depend upon greater strength than our own, which will invigorate our weakness, and carry us successfully to our journey's end.

I observe, secondly, that the production

of the fruits of the Spirit is the only sure evidence we can have or give, of our being under the power and direction of it. It appears, that in the communication of the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, which every true Christian partakes of, there is no outward sensible operation: there is neither a rushing mighty wind to be heard nor cloven tongues of fire to be seen. It acts silently and invisibly, and is only felt in the comfort and refreshment it gives to the soul, and discovers itself by the effects which it produces. What those are, the scriptures have told us, namely, love, joy, peace, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth; with gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance—all the enlivening, mild, and pleasing virtues that belong to the Christian life. And to these they every where refer us, for the evidence of the Spirit, and not to feelings which are occasioned by the passionate emotions of an over-heated imagination or enthusiastic phrenzy.—They give us no intimations of any other feelings, but what arise from a delight in God's commandments, from peace of conscience, from a present sense of God's favour and support, and from well-grounded hopes of everlasting happiness hereafter. These are the feelings of a reasonable nature, which do not tempestuously agitate the mind, but give it a serene composure; which do not overwhelm its faculties, but assist them; which do not play upon the imagination, and transport it with fanatical ecstasies, but fill the heart with a rational comfort and sober joy. Is any one then desirous to know, whether he is truly under the guidance and power of the Living Spirit, let him examine his own state, and inquire, whether he finds in himself a sincere desire of doing the will of God, and an ability to put in practice the duties of his profession; and whether his mind be at peace with God and with itself;—and, the answer will determine the point. If he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, and relies solely upon his merits for the remission of his sins, and his acceptance with God; if he sincerely desires to do God's will, and takes a delight in doing it; if he is punctual and regular in the discharge of the duties

of his religion ; if he keeps himself free from presumptuous and habitual sins, and guards himself, as much as possible, from those of infirmity and surprise, and is grieved and penitent on the commission of them ; if upon an impartial review of his present state his conscience condemns him not, he feels no guilty upbraidings and remorse, but is full of consolation and holy hope—we may then venture to pronounce, upon the surest evidence, that he is guided by the Spirit of God, and is in a state of grace.

The third, and last observation I shall make, is this :—That great care is necessary on our parts to secure the continuance of the divine assistance of the Spirit of Grace, as it is possible that we may be deserted by it, and fall in the end from the life and hopes of a Christian. The holy scriptures, in the various representations they give of a Christian state, always suppose that this may be the case. When the Christian is resembled to one that runs in a race, that he may obtain the prize, he is exhorted to a resolute perseverance in his course, and is cautioned not to stop or faint by the way. St. Paul tells us, that even he himself constantly used the same degree of discipline, and laboured to invigorate himself by spiritual exercises, with the same care and anxiety as they shewed who endeavoured to prepare themselves for the Olympic races, lest he might after all be a cast-away, and fail short of the prize. When the state of a Christian is likened to that of an heir, who is born to the inheritance of a great possession, it is still supposed that he may defeat his own claim. For an heir is not in actual possession, nor will he be put into it, if he ever cancels his title by such acts of disobedience as the law declares to be a forfeiture of it. Nay, where the Holy Spirit is represented to have set his seal to the conveyance, it is not even then irrevocable : for St. Paul, when writing to the Ephesians, he tells them, *they were sealed by the Spirit of God to the day of redemption*, in the very same passage supposes, that the seal might be torn off, and

their inheritance forfeited. Otherwise, he would not have cautioned them against *grieving the Holy Spirit of God*, if it had now been no longer in their power to offend or provoke him ; nor could the Spirit be grieved by those who could not commit sin, which is the only thing that could give them certain assurance of their final salvation. In truth, the condition of human life is inconsistent with such assurance ; for it is, in every stage of it, as it is represented by the scriptures to be, a state of trial and probation ; it is impossible it can be a state of absolute security. And indeed the presumption of such security would be the most likely thing in the world to defeat itself. A persuasion, that we had already won the prize, before our race was finished, would naturally cause in us that remissness, which would be the very occasion of our losing it. It will better become our condition, and contribute more to our safety, to believe, that so long as we are in a state of mortality we are in a state of danger—beset with many powerful enemies, who, if they cannot seduce us by other temptations, will endeavour to puff us up with spiritual pride ; and, by giving us false conceptions of the gifts we may possess, will make them the very instruments of our destruction. Happy are we, if we have sufficient assurance of God's protection and favour in our present state, to make our minds easy and contented. This we may have, as long as we delight in his commandments, and pay a regular obedience to his laws : but such assurance as may be likely to carry us into carelessness and disobedience, would be inconsistent with God's wisdom to give, and our own prudence to desire. And therefore whatever measure of his grace it may please God to impart to any one, it will always be his interest and duty, were he the most perfect man upon earth, to pray for the continuance and increase of it ; knowing, that he can have no security for his perseverance, but from the divine assistance and support, and that he, and he only, *who perseveres unto the end, will be saved*.

SERMON LXXIV.

By Dr. TOTTIE.

Faith the Basis of all Christian Virtues.

[Preached before the University, of Oxford, at Christ Church, April 29, 1770.]

2 PET. i. 5, 6, 7.

Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

IN these words the apostle has connected, in a regular and artificial gradation, all the several virtues that form the life, and complete the character, of a Christian. They are not thrown together in a confused and disorderly manner, but are judiciously placed in a proper and well-disposed arrangement. The first link of the chain is fixed to the throne of God; and the rest hang by each other, supporting, and being supported by those to which they are immediately joined. This orderly assemblage is suggested to us by the etymology of the word *ἡ ἀρετή*; which imports something more than the bare addition of one virtue to another; it denotes the introduction of them in concert with, and in aid of each other, so as to form a complete circle or crown of virtues; for so is the word *ἀρετή* (*ἀρετή—ἀνάλος, εἰς πάντας*. Hesych.) explained by Hesychius. The truth of this representation will appear, by taking an accurate view of the virtues enumerated in my text, in the order in which they lie.

I. The first in the catalogue is faith; which is laid down by the apostle as the principle upon which all that follow, in a due subordination, depend. But as we must be cautious and careful in establishing a principle, which is made the great support of all the essential duties of Christianity, it concerns us to avoid all mistakes in our notions of it; and the more so, as faith is known to be a word that bears different senses in the New Testament. Without inquiring

what senses it does not bear in my text, I shall lay before you that which it does; and that you may be sure it is the true one, St. Peter himself shall explain it to you.

In the first verse of this chapter, he makes mention of the faith, which is common to all true Christians, to whom he says it is alike precious; i. e. it equally entitles them to its valuable claims and privileges; *not through their own righteousness, but through the righteousness of God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ*. The object of this faith, he tells us at the third and fourth verses, *are the exceeding great and precious promises, assured to us by the power of God, through the knowledge of Christ*, by which we are called to glory and virtue, and are thereby made partakers of the divine nature. He then enumerates the virtues which are dependent upon this faith; and exhorts the brethren to use all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by the practice of them; the never-failing consequence and reward of which, will be an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We find the same notion of faith in St. Peter's first epistle. At the third verse of the first chapter, he describes the state of Christians to be that of those, *whom God, by his abundant mercy, had begotten again unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us*. The joys of heaven are here represented to be the objects of a Christian's hope. But hope has its foundation in faith; and the objects of both must be the same: for we must believe a thing to be attainable, before we can hope to attain it. They are accordingly, at the twenty-first verse, both joined together, and stand upon the same foundation, that of Christ's resurrection. For we are there said to believe in God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. And, at the ninth verse, he expressly declares the end, or ultimate aim of our faith to be the salvation of our souls. By this it appears,

that the faith, which is the foundation of virtue, is a firm reliance upon the promises of God, for the enjoyment of a blessed immortality made known to us by the revelation of the gospel, procured through the righteousness, and assured to us by the resurrection, of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is the true faith of a Christian, to which all the great and precious promises of the gospel belong. All other intermediate acts of faith are subordinate to this, which is the ultimate end and perfection of the gospel; and they have no value, but as they lead to, and center in, this great and operative principle of religion. For although we believe Jesus to be the Messiah foretold and described in the ancient prophecies; though we believe him to be the eternal Son of God, whose power was made manifest to the world in signs and wonders and mighty works; though we receive the gospel as an authentic relation of his life and words and actions;—yet if these acts of faith did not open to us the prospect of everlasting life, and direct our views and hopes towards the happiness of heaven, our faith would be a mere speculative amusement in matters wherein we had no concern, and from which we could receive no possible advantage. The ultimate faith of a Christian therefore is that which terminates in the promises of God, and the glory which is hereafter to be revealed.

II. The apostle having thus laid the basis of the Christian life in faith, he then directs us how to raise upon it the structure of moral virtue. *Add to your faith, virtue.* Some expositors considering, that the original word *ἀρετή* often denotes military virtue, which consists in bravery and fortitude, and that the Christian state is properly represented to be a state of warfare, have confined it to this sense. And the connection is well preserved by it. For in times of trial and conflict, courage and constancy are necessary supports to faith. But others, and I think truly, understand it in its more common and general sense; in which it is used by St. Paul, on a similar occasion, in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. iv. ver. 8. where he re-

commends virtue at large, and distinguishes the several branches of it in the very same manner as St. Peter in my text will be found to do.

The connection between faith and the general practice of virtue needs no illustration. For since faith is a religious reliance upon the promises of God, for the future possession of a blessed immortality, made known to us by the revelation of the gospel, and procured for us through the merits of Christ; and since the same gospel declares holiness and virtue to be the express conditions upon which the promises of God are founded; it is evident, that faith cannot be divided from virtue; for it is not the faith of the gospel, nor is it entitled to the rewards of it, if it be barren and unfruitful in the works of righteousness. And in this connection the Christian morality has a support, which was wanting in all the moral systems of the philosophers. They defined virtue, and distinguished the several species of it, with great exactness; they found it to be consonant to nature and reason; and from this consideration alone they deduced our obligations to the practice of it. But was nature so pure, or reason so perfect, as to want no additional enforcements in support of virtue against the corruption of the one, or the weakness and instability of the other? This great omission the gospel has supplied; and the exercise of faith, which fixes our dependence upon the promises of God, and our views upon the happiness of heaven, will keep us steady and immovable in the paths of virtue, so long as we lose not sight of the great recompense of its reward.

III. Knowledge is next introduced; in order to make our faith and virtue complete. This is properly an intellectual endowment, but yet, in the application of it, partakes of a moral nature. For we must know and understand our duty before we can practise it. Knowledge has respect both to faith and virtue; and the wrong and imperfect notions that have been entertained concerning each of these, and which have been very injurious to religion, shew the necessity of our being furnished with it in matters both of belief and practice. We

must know the nature and object of our faith; otherwise it will be an erroneous and deceitful guide; we must know the foundation of it, or the grounds upon which it is built, otherwise it will not be rational; we must know the inseparable connection that faith has with virtue, otherwise it will be vain and useless. Knowledge is no less necessary to give us right apprehensions of the nature and power of virtue. Knowledge, in general, is acquired by the contemplation of truth, and consists in an adequate perception of it. It is necessary, therefore, to enable us to distinguish real virtue from that which is only such in opinion, and to fix the precise boundaries of moral truth and falsehood. For want of this, many qualities and actions have been deemed virtuous, which, in truth, are of a contrary nature, and have been as detrimental and mischievous to mankind as the worst of vices.—And knowledge likewise, which is the mother of prudence, is what must regulate the virtues themselves. It is this which fixes them at their true point, that golden mean where all the virtues arrive at their perfection; for if they fall short of this, or go beyond it, they lose their name and nature.—But the knowledge we gain from revelation will carry us further. Having enlarged our views, and improved our discernment, in the contemplation of virtue, by laying the foundation of it in religion, it has strengthened its obligation, refined its nature, and extended its branches.—Place the principle of virtue, as the heathen moralists did, in the rectitude and decorum of action, and in social relation only, making it to depend upon the sense of right and wrong, and temporal advantage or disadvantage, of worldly praise or blame; or, superadd to these motives, which the gospel does by no means reject, the fear of God, and a reliance upon his promises for the certain and inestimable rewards of virtue in a future state; and our obligations to the practice of it will rise in the same proportion, as divine sanctions are superior to human.—The gospel has likewise refined and exalted the nature of virtue. For it is there represented as a transcript from him who is the great archetype of all goodness;

and it dignifies human nature by an assimilation to the divine. It reflects in us the image of our Maker, by taking possession of the heart, and making it its repository. It extends to the regulation of our very thoughts and desires; for the seeds of corruption must be rooted out of our minds, before we can arrive at that state of virtuous perfection which the gospel requires.—But revealed knowledge has moreover introduced to our acquaintance a new train of the most amiable virtues, to which they must be strangers, whose actions are regulated, how wisely soever, by a regard to the relations and concerns of this life only. For when we have learned to consider ourselves as pilgrims and sojourners in this world, whose inheritance is in a better,—resignation to the will of God; complacency and humility; equanimity, unruffled by provocations and injuries; forbearance and forgiveness; meekness, gentleness, and goodness; contentment and patience; moderation of desires; and a generous contempt of every thing that interferes with our views and hopes of immortality; all these will be adopted by us, as the genuine virtues and the peculiar ornaments of the Christian state.

By these remarks it appears, that our knowledge of virtue must take in the consideration of its nature, obligation, and extent. In this last respect it will be of farther use to us, by giving us a distinct and comprehensive division of its several branches. For it is this distribution of the virtues, according to the rules of science, which forms them into a regular system, and at once lays open to our view the whole compass of moral duty. We are not at liberty to suppose, that the virtues which follow are introduced by the apostle in a careless and confused manner, when they are evidently classed under the general distinction of personal virtues, of those which have God for their object, and of such as relate to man. And there is no impropriety in giving the personal virtues the first place in the catalogue. For to know ourselves is the primary essential knowledge, upon which the knowledge of our relation to other beings, and the duties that arise from it, which take in the whole compass of morality, depend.

IV. The personal virtues are comprised under the general denomination of temperance and patience. The knowledge of ourselves will naturally lead us to temperance; or as the original word *byzantia* properly signifies, the command and government of ourselves in the use and enjoyment of the good things of this life. For if we know that our passions and appetites are eager in the pursuit of such gratifications as are suited to their respective cravings, we know likewise that we are in possession of a superior faculty, whose business it is to watch over and controul their irregularities and excess. And we shall think it fit and right, that a blind impulse, which has no power of self-restraint, should be put under the conduct of reason. From knowing ourselves, we shall likewise know the advantages of a regular self-government. Our frame and constitution require it, in order to preserve the vigour and harmony of our faculties both in body and mind. It is this which gives us the true enjoyment of life, and is the parent of health, and peace, and joy.—Beyond this, the knowledge of ourselves supposes the knowledge of our origin and dependence; from which the personal virtues receive a stronger enforcement and obligation. For we must be accountable for our conduct to our Maker and Governor: and it is the will of him who made us rational creatures, that we should act agreeably to reason. So that it is not left to our own prudence and discretion, whether we will retain the command of ourselves or not, but it is a matter of strict duty; and whenever we deviate in our self-government from the rule of right reason, we transgress the law of God.—But this class of virtues is still further improved, and receives an additional force, by the knowledge we gain from revelation. For as we are thereby taught, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, whose residence prepares and fits us for immortality, we must necessarily cleanse our hearts from all evil and corrupt affections, and furnish them with the virtues of temperance and sobriety, continence and chastity, moderation of desires and purity of thoughts, before they can be qualified

for the reception of this heavenly guest, and be honoured with the habitation of God through the Spirit.

V. Were this world the constant and unvaried scene of a regular enjoyment of the blessings of life, temperance, in its comprehensive signification, would be the only personal virtue we should have occasion to put in practice. But the great and various troubles and misfortunes, incident to our nature and situation, have made patience a necessary and useful virtue. This is no other than the right government of ourselves in adversity, as temperance is in prosperity. In lighter afflictions the spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities; but when the trial is severe, how is this command of ourselves to be acquired; where is this difficult virtue of patience to be learned? Our natural fortitude will fail us, when it has itself no support; when we look around us, and there is no remedy to be found without; when we search our own spirit, and there is no consolation from within. Our sufferings will beat down the powers of nature and reason, and sink us into the miseries of despair. Nevertheless, our case is not desperate; there is still a remedy to be found in patience; but it must be in Christian patience; and this is no where to be learned but in the rudiments of the gospel. For the good Christian is there taught to consider afflictions not merely as natural evils, but as the chastisements of our Heavenly Father, inflicted for the correction of sin, or for the trial and improvement of virtue. And when he sees afflictions in this light, a patient resignation to the will of God, a confidence in the divine protection, and a view to the increase of the recompence of his reward, will be his support and comfort, and make him more than conqueror in all the fiery trials of adversity.

VI. This shews the intimate connection and union that patience has with piety; and therefore godliness is next introduced by the apostle in its due place and order. The original word *doxologia* denotes the reverence, adoration, and honour, we owe to the Supreme Being, on account of the several relations we stand in to him. The good

centurion Cornelius is said to have been *εὐσεβὴς*, a man of piety, and one that feared God. This is the character of a truly religious man. And therefore godliness, or the fear of God, (which is an equivalent expression,) comprehends all the offices of piety, all the religious duties which are due to God, as *the Maker of all things, the Judge of all men, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Christian knowledge has enlarged this branch of duty likewise; and made it more fruitful. The light of reason had discovered to those few, who would suffer themselves to be guided by it, the being and attributes of God, whom they found in his works, and acknowledged him to be their Father and Governor, Preserver and Benefactor. The duties arising from these relations are obvious, and easy to be deduced. And yet the fact is certain, that though they knew God, they honoured him not as God, neither obeyed him, nor did they worship him in the manner that the purity and holiness of his nature required. How much then are we indebted to the gospel, which has confirmed and published to the whole world the true principles of natural religion in this its primary and fundamental article; has taught us to pay a reasonable service to our Maker in spirit and in truth; and has moreover included all the virtues in that service, by making them duties, and referring the obligation of them to the Supreme Author of every good work? But the gospel has gone further, and has discovered to us a new relation we stand in to God, as our Redeemer. For all the duties (including those of a positive nature) which gratitude and affection can pay, in return for the most amazing instance of infinite mercy and love, as an offering acceptable to God, which purity of heart and fervour of devotion must sanctify, are bound upon us by the gospel, and make an essential part of Christian morality.

The virtues that follow and close the train are the social ones. And these have a necessary connection with piety; for *he who loveth God must love his brother also*. If we consider ourselves as Christians, and the children of God by adoption and grace, united by one spirit, under one common Lord and Master,

partakers of the same redemption, and heirs of the same salvation, brotherly love and kindness cannot be separated from such an intimate relation and conjunction. And if we consider God as the common Father of mankind, who embraces all his children with the tenderness and affection of a father, and is kind even to the disobedient and unthankful, we must break the ties of our own relation to him, if we are not kind and tender towards those who are the children of God; if we do not cultivate a spirit of universal benevolence and charity. Add therefore to godliness, first of all, brotherly kindness—*φιλανθρωπία*, or the love of our Christian brethren. For this appellation, in the New Testament, appropriated to Christians.

VII. The Relation that Christians stand in to one another produces so intimate an union, that it is compared by St. Paul to that which subsists between the members of the same natural body, wherein one common sensation is diffused throughout the whole, and *if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it*. And our Saviour illustrates it by the union of the branches in a vine, which, deriving their sustenance from the same root, are all partakers of one common life. These comparisons shew, not only that it is unreasonable, but that it is unnatural and impossible, for those who are members of the body of Christ, and are actuated by the true spirit of his religion, ever to be wanting in fellow-feeling, in affection, and kindness towards their Christian brethren. For this reason, our blessed Saviour has declared love to be the distinguishing badge and characteristic of the Christian profession; so that he who divides his interest from that of the community, and breaks that bond of union which holds it together in one spirit, under one head, has in effect detached himself from it, and is no longer a branch of the same heavenly vine, no longer a member of the same spiritual body. The nature of this union is different from, and superior in kind to, any other. By the Spirit of Christ, which diffuses itself through all the members of this church militant and triumphant, it connects us not only with all his faithful followers upon earth, but

with the blessed saints in heaven. It results from the relation that spirits immortal, joint heirs of one common salvation, have to each other, and is a spiritual and sacred union, which neither death nor time can dissolve.

VIII. But as an intimate union in separate societies, especially when they are distinguished by peculiar privileges and honours, is apt to produce a disregard and contempt of all other men, who have not the same pre-eminence of distinction, the Apostle has added charity, or universal benevolence, as a proper supplement to brotherly love; and with this he closes his catalogue of Christian virtues.—Charity, in this sense, comprehends all the social virtues which depend upon our relation to one another as men, connected by various ties in this life. And this relation, at the same time that it takes in all mankind, subsists betwixt Christians themselves. Hence arise the natural duties of parental, filial, and conjugal relation, and those which we owe to our neighbours, or to all men with whom we have any interest or concern. To these

must perform all acts of humanity, benevolence, and kindness, as the relation is more near or remote, and as our respective situations and circumstances require. No clashing of interest, no difference of religious opinions, no distinctions of country or party, will exempt us from these. So general is the gospel law of good-will towards men, that it extends to our very enemies. It requires us to forgive their injuries, and as far as prudence, the guide of every virtue, will permit, to retaliate with beneficence. But the description given of charity by St. Paul will best shew the nature and extent of this virtue. *Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.* How extensive is this virtue, and how fruitful of blessings to mankind! It cuts up by the root all the causes of contention and mischief. It drives from the heart of man pride, hatred, and envy, impatience

and anger, peevish animosities, suspicions and jealousies. It plants in the room of them, the love of truth and justice; integrity, equity, and moderation; kindness and forbearance; candour and condescension; a courteous disposition; and a decent and obliging behaviour. Thus does our religion endeavour to secure, by this excellent and comprehensive virtue of charity, the good order and peace and happiness of this world, whilst it opens to us the prospect of a better.

I have now gone through the several virtues enumerated in my text, which form a complete and perfect system of the Christian morality; and I have endeavoured to shew, that they are judiciously ranged, by an artificial gradation, in a regular and pensive one upon another. It has indeed generally been allowed, that the Apostle's catalogue of virtues is complete; but I think sufficient attention has not been given to the propriety of their order and disposition. It has been my principal aim to do justice to the Apostle in this point, without offering any violence to the strict and proper sense of the words, or forcing them into an unnatural connection.

This connection may perhaps be further illustrated and confirmed, by comparing St. Peter's system of Christian morality with that of St. Paul's before mentioned, as he has given it us at the 8th verse of the 4th chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. In the foregoing chapter (vid. verse 9, 10, 11.) he has laid the same foundation of a Christian's life and conversation, as St. Peter has done, in faith: and, in like manner, he makes the glories of a future state the object of it. Upon this foundation he builds his system of moral virtues in the following order: *Whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure;* these we are to think upon and regard as the essential duties of Christianity: *And whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,* these are the ornamental graces of it. By truth St. Paul denotes the general nature of virtue; moral truth and virtue being one and the same thing. For truth in speculation is virtue in practice. And therefore knowledge, which consists in the perception and discovery of truth, is that which must lead us to virtue. He then

resolves the general idea of virtue into its several species, comprised under the terms, honest, just, and pure. It would be impossible not to see that this division comprehends the three great branches of duty, which relate to God, to man, and to ourselves, did not the wrong translation of the word *σεμνός* (honest) mislead us, and preposterously introduce a very illogical distribution of the Apostle's subject. It properly denotes, in this place, whatsoever things are the object of religious veneration. For this acceptation of the word, we have the authority of Heathen, Jewish, and Christian writers, who frequently use it as an appellation belonging to the most solemn acts and mysteries of religion, to the laws, to the temple, and to the name of God. In this sense it answers to the *εὐσεβία* of St. Peter. They are both derived from the same root; and though they both admit a latitude of construction, yet in their strict and original signification, which we have no reason to depart from, they are descriptive of some religious or devout act, performed with an intention to honour God thereby. The foundation therefore of virtue, and the division of it into its several species, is the same in both the Apostles. For though the words are different, yet in their extended sense they are of the same import. For as brotherly love and charity evidently oblige us to all acts of justice, so justice extends to all acts of brotherly love and charity; for all men have, in a due proportion, a strict right and claim to these; and it is an act of injustice not to pay them their dues, as different relations and circumstances require. And purity bears a sense equivalent to that of temperance. For all indulgences in pleasures of any kind, inconsistent with a regular self-government, are sensuality; and all sensuality, in the Scripture account, is impurity and pollution. And all the subordinate virtues will range themselves alike under the correspondent branches of the general division of each

of the Apostle's systems. St. Paul indeed seems to have given his virtues an additional improvement, by requiring the embellishment of that decorum and grace which are necessary to make virtue amiable and attractive. But this improvement, though not expressed by St. Peter, is necessarily implied. For, in truth, it is an appendage inseparable from Christian virtue. For whosoever is possessed of the true spirit of Christianity, and duly cultivates the virtues that are peculiar to it, will, of course, have his mind and manners framed to gentleness and decency, to grace and goodness; and that behaviour, which is formed by the heart, and is the natural result of all those lovely virtues, which make up the train of charity, will have more genuine gracefulness in it, will be more engaging and amiable, than its counterfeit, which consists in appearances only, is acquired by art, and is oftentimes false and deceitful.

Thus have these two great Apostles, concurring in the same general plan, and in a similar disposition of the parts, raised upon a solid foundation a complete and beautiful structure of moral virtue in just symmetry and proportion. It is our duty, and it will be our happiness, to contemplate this regular and comprehensive system of virtues; to fix them in our memories and minds, and to transcribe them into our practice. There is a mutual connection betwixt them, and a dependence one upon another. We cannot leave a single virtue of the scale, without breaking the chain that reaches from heaven to earth, and by which we must ascend from earth to heaven. After we have washed away our sins by repentance, it is the integrity and uniformity of a virtuous conduct, that must raise us to Christian perfection, and entitle us to the prize of our high calling. We can build our hopes of it upon no other foundation, than that which is laid, namely, faith in Christ Jesus; and if faith is our guide to virtue, virtue will lead us to glory.

SERMON LXXV.

By DR. TOTTIE.

A proper Resurrection of the Body,
the primitive Faith of God's
People from the earliest Ages.[Preached before the University of Oxford, at
Christ Church, Feb. 16th, 1772.]

MATTHEW, XXII. 31, 32.

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

THE Sadducees, it is well-known, were a sect among the Jews who denied the resurrection of the dead. This error seems to have been founded in other wrong notions which they had adopted, namely, that no Scriptures had authority to establish any doctrines which were not contained in the writings of Moses; and that in these no discovery had been made of any resurrection. It appears, by St. Matthew's narrative, that some of this sect came to encounter our Saviour upon this point of doctrine; and imagined, no doubt, that they should puzzle him with an argument, which, according to their notions of a resurrection, seemed a very shrewd one. It was that of a woman having had seven husbands in her lifetime; the question was, whose wife she should be in the resurrection? Here again was another mistake; for they supposed that, if there was any such thing as another world, men would carry with them into it the same passions, appetites, and affections, as were natural to them in this; and that sensual gratifications were to make the chief part of their happiness there.

All these errors our blessed Lord, in his reply, takes upon him to correct. In doing this, he first lays open to them the source of their fundamental and capital mistake, in rejecting the doctrine of a resurrection. *Ye do err*, says he, *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.* Which words, with those that follow, may be thus illustrated: If God

has power to raise the dead to life again, and has declared that he will raise them, then this article of faith is established upon a sure foundation. Of the former you can have no reasonable doubt; for to make a man originally out of the dust of the earth, and to raise him up again out of the same dust, are evidently similar acts of the same power. Of the latter you have the evidence not only of the Scriptures, which you reject in this case without cause, but even of those which you admit; as I shall presently shew you. In the mean time I must observe, that you are greatly mistaken in your notion of a resurrection. The relations which are necessary in this life will have no place in the next: the faculties of man will be there suited to his situation; and he will be like the angels of God in heaven, having undergone such a change both of soul and body, as will qualify him for the everlasting enjoyment of celestial happiness. And the reality of this future state, which you disbelieve, you may collect from the writings even of Moses himself. Consider the words which were spoken unto you, or for your information, by God, when he said, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* These words certainly denote an eminent degree of God's favour and blessing bestowed, or intended to be bestowed, upon these patriarchs. But it does not appear that they were distinguished by worldly blessings in such a manner, as to give a reason to think them, in this respect, the peculiar favourites of Heaven. They had in this world as great a share of trouble and afflictions as other men. One of them in particular declared, in his old age, *few and evil, or unhappy, have the days of my life been.* The happiness, therefore, which these righteous men found not upon earth, must have been reserved for them in a better country, that is, an heavenly. Immortality must have been the object of their views, and the intended reward of their faith: *for God is not the God of the dead*, who had a short, temporal, painful existence; *but of the living*, who shall exist in happiness for ever.

Here then you have the great moral argument for a state of future retribution, arising from the insufficiency and defects

of it in this life, confirmed and authenticated by the declaration of God himself. And we must allow the argument to be as clear as it is decisive for a future state of retribution. But the thing to be proved was, the resurrection of the body; of which the argument is not a direct proof, if the souls of men are supposed to survive them, and are capable of constituting such a self-conscious personality as will will subject them to rewards or punishments hereafter. This, we know, was the opinion of some of the philosophers, who rejected the notion of a resurrection with scorn. To these, therefore, our Saviour's argument for it would have been by no means conclusive: but it was conclusive to those who thought the doctrine of a future state to be inseparably connected with that of the resurrection. And of the reality of this connection the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, were universally persuaded. And not only so, but the same persuasion had prevailed among the people of God, from the earliest ages of the world.

It will be no improper employment of our time, as it will be an illustration and confirmation of our Saviour's argument, if we endeavour to investigate the origin of this notion, and to learn what foundation it stands upon in holy writ.

It cannot, with any degree of probability, be supposed, that the doctrine of a resurrection took its rise from any imagination or conception of man. It is a thing contrary to all sense and experience. Death has reigned over all men from the beginning of the world, and will reign as long as the world shall endure. And of all that are gone down to the grave, no one ever was known to return, nor was it ever surmised that any will return, from any possible effort of nature. Nature indeed has furnished us with hopes, and reason with a persuasion, *that the spirit will return unto God who gave it*. But of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, nature has no support, and reason is bewildered in the contemplation of it. We must therefore necessarily conclude, that the resurrection of the body; which nothing in nature could lead men to the discovery of, and therefore could make no principle of natural reli-

gion, must have been revealed by God himself. And if it is a certain truth, as it will appear to be, that as far back as we can trace any notices of the belief of a future state, we shall find the belief of a resurrection united with it, it may reasonably be supposed, that this mode of future existence was first revealed to Adam, and preserved as a tradition received from their first parent by the patriarchs and the chosen people of God. Nor did it rest upon tradition only, assurances of it having been renewed at instant times to several eminent and holy men, before the institution of the Jewish commonwealth, and during the continuance of it. Let us then proceed to inquire what light the scriptures of the Old Testament (for to these we must have recourse) have thrown upon this subject.

And in this inquiry we must be allowed in some cases to follow our Saviour's manner of reasoning, by arguing from inference rather than from express and positive declarations. And this concession must be particularly claimed in the discovery of the notices supposed to be given to our first parent of a resurrection. The support of this supposition will rest upon what is recorded in the third chapter of Genesis, where we have the sentence passed upon Adam, and the alleviation of it, immediately after his fall.

When God made known to Adam the punishment of his disobedience, he tells him, *that he was taken out of the ground - that dust he was, and that he should return to dust*. Here then the dissolution and destruction of the body are denounced in the very words of the sentence. But there is likewise an alleviation of the sentence, and a consolation to be derived from it, which must therefore necessarily have a respect to the sentence itself. The serpent, the great seducer, had beguiled man; but he is told, *that he would have no reason to triumph in the success of his guile; for he would find an enemy in the seed of the woman, whose heel he would bruise, but who should bruise his head*; which phrases denote the former to be a curable, however envenomed, the latter to be an incurable and fatal wound. Whether Adam understood the full import of these remarkable words,—by whom,

and by what wonderful means the wound of man would be healed, and the serpent's treachery avenged—we have no authority from Scripture to determine. But if they were intended to afford any consolation to him in his forlorn and wretched condition, (and less than this cannot be supposed,) what is it that he could collect from them? (He was sentenced to gain his bread by labour, and to eat it with sorrow, and to lie down in the dust at the end of a miserable life.) What cure was there for death? or what comfort could he find in any other reflection, than in having the hopes of life being restored to him? And what notion could he have of the restoration of life, but of its being the restoration of the living man, by the reunion of the soul and body, in the same manner as his nature was at first constituted? And it must not escape our observation, that when God made known to Adam, that death was the punishment of his disobedience, he puts him in mind of his origin, and tells him, *that he was taken out of the ground—that dust he was, and that he should return to dust*. This explanation of his existence might afterwards lead him naturally to reflect, that it evidently carried in it the strongest assurance, that the same divine power which at first animated the lifeless dust, could most certainly re-animate it in the same manner. From these considerations it may, I think, be reasonably supposed, that if Adam had any assurances given him of a restoration to life, which was the only consolation he could receive under the sentence of death, they were imparted to him under the notion and expectation of the resurrection of the body, and the re-union of the body and soul.

If our first parent was possessed of the knowledge of this important truth, upon which his own hopes and those of all his posterity must depend, we cannot suppose that he would suffer it to die with him, but that he would carefully make it known to his children, and transmit it to his descendants as the most precious and valuable discovery, which alone could make them amends for the misery and destruction he had entailed upon them. But whatever care might have been taken to communicate this doctrine, we soon find that it was not duly attended to, nor long

remembered. For we read, that when men began to multiply upon the earth, impiety and irreligion kept pace with the increase of mankind, so as to corrupt the sons of God—even those who had received this original principle of a religious faith. There were some however of the race of Seth who preserved their faith and integrity. And among these there is one in particular, who seems to have been a sign given to this sensual and unbelieving generation, for the very purpose of recalling to their minds the sense of a future state, under the form in which it had been revealed to our first parent. Enoch was translated without passing through the gates of death, in testimony of the efficacy of that faith by which he walked with God. And this translation was an unexceptionable evidence to the unbelievers of those days, that there is a reward in another state for the righteous. And not only so, but it was at the same time a direct proof and a memorial, that the bodies as well as the souls of men are capable of being admitted into the mansions of the blessed; and that it was the purpose of the Almighty, that the entire man, both in body and soul, should be received into those everlasting habitations. Why Enoch was translated alive, and not raised from the dead, which may seem to be a proof more directly in point of the thing supposed to be intended, there is an obvious reason: as the great Redeemer was to be the author, so he must of necessity have been the first-fruits of the resurrection to a life immortal.

But convincing and alarming as this wonderful event was, such is the unhappy state of things, that when iniquity and vice give strength to each other, divine revelations of every kind are disregarded. Even the judgments of God, how dreadful soever they may be, will not make any lasting impression upon the hearts of men. For in a few ages after the deluge, there were but a small number that were found faithful among the descendants of Noah. The most illustrious of these was Abraham. And God was pleased to confirm his faith, by giving him a more distinct view of the resurrection to life, than had been given perhaps to any of his progenitors.

And, like-
God had revealed to Abraham explicit

his seed, all the nations and families of the earth should be blessed; and that the person through whom this blessing would be conveyed from him was his son Isaac. Yet he is commanded to sacrifice this very son of his affections and hopes, while he was a youth, and before he had any offspring; and he readily obeys the command. And a very rational act of obedience it was in one who had frequent intercourse by visions, appearances, and revelations with the Almighty God; and who had received this very son by an extraordinary instance of the divine favour, contrary to his own expectations and belief, and to the usual course of nature. He had therefore grounds sufficient to assure him that the command was from God, and to induce him to believe, that, if God intended to convey the blessing to mankind through the loins of Isaac, he would most undoubtedly, for this purpose, raise him up from the dead. This was the faith of Abraham, which removed all difficulties and doubts in obeying the command of the Lord of life and death. But there was something more in this matter. In the trial of Abraham's faith, there was, moreover, a strong confirmation of it. The Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 19.) informs us, that he received his son raised from the dead to life again, *ἐκ νεκρῶν*,—a word which Hesychius defines to be *παραμύσεων ομοιωσις*, a similitude of facts. And there is in this case such an exact and minute correspondence, in many very remarkable particulars, betwixt the facts, betwixt the transaction relating to Isaac, and what happened to our Saviour, that the former has generally been understood by the Christian church, in all ages, to have been a typical representation of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. The only question is, whether Abraham apprehended it to be such? The words spoken by God upon another occasion may not improperly be applied to this: *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do—seeing that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?* (Gen. xviii. 17, 18.) And that it was not hid from him, we have the plain declaration of our Saviour himself, when

Abraham rejoiced to see my day,
and was glad. (John,

viii. 56.) The day of Christ, or the day of the Lord, in other places of the New Testament, always signifies the day of the general resurrection; but here it denotes that important day, whereon he gained himself the victory over sin and death, and triumphed openly over him that had the power of death, even the old serpent, by his own resurrection. For what other circumstance can we suppose Abraham to have seen in Christ's appearance upon earth, beside his resurrection, that could have filled him, as the original words import, with an exultation and tumult of joy from the expectation of seeing it, and with a more temperate joy, corrected, as we may well suppose, by the preceding prospect of Christ's humiliation, when he saw it? *“Ὁ γὰρ ἀναστὰς ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ ἡμεῖς, καὶ ἰχθύες.”* Here then we learn, from the obvious sense of our Saviour's words, that when Abraham received his son raised from the dead to life again, in the same typical sense in which he offered him up, the whole transaction was exhibited to him as an explanation of the blessing which was to give life to the whole world.

The same faith in the resurrection of the dead was preserved by pious and good men, and declared by them in the strongest terms at proper intervals of time, when it seems to have wanted a revival. The book of Job is supposed, upon good grounds, to have been written before the law was given by Moses. In this book there is a passage, wherein, if we should suppose Job to have been called upon to have declared his belief in a resurrection, (which seems to have been the case,) he could not possibly have made use of clearer or stronger terms. They are indeed so very clear and strong, that this, I apprehend, has been a principal reason why some learned men have forced them into another sense; from an imagination, that the very best men of those times could not have had so perfect and adequate a conception, as we there find, of that life and immortality which was to be brought to light by the gospel. This matter will be considered in its proper place. In the mean time, let it be observed, that if Job meant only to declare his persuasion of the recovery of his health and happiness in this life, why does he so often re-

nounce this hope in the most pathetic strains of despair? Why does he cry out, *Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul? which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures?* Why does he say, *Mine eyes shall no more see good; the eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more; thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.* These, and many more of the same kind, are evidently the lamentations of a man who had no prospect of finding any relief from his miseries on this side the grave. And for this despondency and repining, he is charged by Eliphaz, (chap. xv.) with want of religious faith; with *having cast off the fear of God; for he believeth not*, saith he, *that he shall return out of darkness.* On the same account he is charged by Bildad (chap. xviii.) *with knowing not God.* These accusations brought from him, in his reply, (chap. xix.) a confession of his faith, which he introduces with a solemn prayer, that it might be engraved in the rock, and continue for an everlasting memorial to all generations. The sense of this remarkable confession I shall give in a short and strict paraphrase of the text, from the authority of very able and judicious critics. "I know for certainty that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall at last, or in the last day, arise with power over the dust, that dust out of which man was made. Then shall this dilacerated body put on a new cloathing. *Veachar yori nikkepah zoth. Alia erit cutis mea lucc laceratio.*" So the words are read and translated by Michaelis. "And from my own body shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself; with mine own eyes shall I behold him; nor shall I then be a man different from myself." This was the root of the matter found in him—the foundation and support of Job's integrity. And here we have the resurrection of the one identical body, so as to constitute the same individual person, asserted in as clear and strong a manner as language is capable of doing it.

We must not expect to find any thing relating to this subject in those historical books of the Old Testament, which give an account of the civil affairs of the

Jews, and the institution and settlement of their commonwealth. Only we must observe, that their whole economy, and the great events which happened to them, especially their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, were types and figures of better things to come; their ultimate views being thereby directed to that great deliverance, and that heavenly Canaan, which had been the object of the faith of all holy men from the beginning of the world.

Under what notion this faith was still retained in the days of David, we may learn from the 16th Psalm, where he makes mention of the resurrection of the body in very express terms. *Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, i. e. my life in the grave, neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.* The latter part of the words confines this text to the person of Christ, who saw no corruption, which David himself did. But he who had a prophetic view of Christ's resurrection, cannot be supposed not to have known the design and effects of it, but must have looked upon it as the pledge and assurance of his own. The belief of it is likewise very clearly expressed in the 49th Psalm, which is ushered in by a solemn call for the attention of all mankind, as being the concern of all. The Psalmist first observes, that irreligious men, however great and powerful, had no power to redeem a brother from the grave, "that he should live for ever and not see corruption." They could not pay the price of this redemption. He then tells them, that notwithstanding their pride and presumption, *they would be laid in the grave like sheep; death should feed upon them, and the righteous, in their turn, should have dominion over them in the morning of their resurrection; for God, saith he, will redeem my soul, or life, from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.*

In a few descents after David, the Jews in general had well nigh abandoned the faith and hopes of their forefathers. Therefore God was pleased to give them the same sign in Elijah for the same purpose, as had been given to the Antediluvians in Enoch. They received, likewise, about this time, the most explicit

declarations of the resurrection from a prophet, who, from the clear view he had of the Messiah's kingdom, and of the great events which were to establish and follow it; has been usually stiled the Evangelical Prophet. I shall only produce two passages from Isaiah, with this previous observation; that the prophecies, which have an apparent reference to some particular circumstances of the Jewish state, are so expressed, as to carry our views to some other more important object, for the sake of which that state was at first erected, and was all along conducted and preserved by a particular providence. And it is most evident, that in many parts of his prophecies, descriptions are given of a future glorious state, which cannot correspond with the state of things in this world, under any of the dispensations of Providence, which have yet appeared, and which hitherto are manifestly incomplete, and preparatory only to that great event which is to be the consummation of all things.

In the 26th chapter of Isaiah, verse 19, are these words: *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of heaven, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* And again, in the 21st verse, *The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* Suppose these texts to have a relation to the general resurrection, as the Jewish interpreters apply them, and every word is plain and significant: but suppose them to mean no more than the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians, or any other deliverance of the Jews, and the expression must appear much to overcharge the sense.

But there is another very remarkable passage in Isaiah, which well deserves our attention. You will find it in the last chapter of his prophecies. He had given, in the 53d chapter, a prophetic description of the sufferings and death of Christ; and had he been to have written an historical account of them after the events, he could not have done it with a greater exactness and precision. He there mentions likewise his coming to life again; *he shall see his seed, and*

shall prolong his days. In several of the following chapters, he mentions the creation of new heavens and a new earth, and describes the felicity of them in such expressions as can only suit the future pacific state of the Messiah's kingdom. After this, in the close of his prophecies, he introduces, with a solemnity suitable to their importance, the following words, *as an acclamation from the city, as a voice from the temple, as a voice of the Lord. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pains came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day; or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord? Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb, saith thy God?* Apply this passage to any subsequent deliverances of the Jews—to their return from the Babylonish captivity—or to their recovery from the desolations of Antiochus; or apply it to the great and sudden increase of the Christian church, on the first preaching of the gospel; and what agreement can you find in either case betwixt the prophecy and the events? In the former application, who was the man child that the earth was to bring forth before her general delivery? How was a nation born at once, and in one day, when those deliverances were the work of time, attended with difficulties, interruptions, and delays, partial and incomplete? How is it, that such a thing was never seen or heard of before, when the deliverance of this very people from their bondage in Egypt was much more miraculous and astonishing? In the latter application, though we read of three thousand being made proselytes to the gospel in one day, yet how small a proportion did the Jewish converts in general bear to the unconverted part of their nation? In the Gentile world, the conversion was slower, and the disproportion greater. In either case, great force must be used to give an improper sense to the words which is not in any proportionate degree reconcileable to facts. But apply them to the resurrection of Christ, and

the sudden uninterrupted resurrection of the universal church of God, to which this prophecy is limited, in consequence of it, and every word is pertinent, expressive, and emphatical. This scene, we are told, will be disclosed, when the glory of the Gentiles shall have flown in, and all the Jews shall be brought as an offering to the Lord from all nations; and then it is that our Saviour likewise has told us, *the end shall come* (Matt. xxiv. 14.) when, according to this prophecy, this new-raised seed, and the new heavens, and the new earth, shall appear and remain together. And farther still, what leaves us no room to doubt of the sense of this passage, is our Lord's repeated application of the very words, which Isaiah makes use of to express the vengeance of God upon the ungodly in the end of this prophecy, to the final punishment of them in the day of judgment—*Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched*. The other part of the prophecy therefore must, by parity of application, relate to the joyful resurrection of the church of God.

Your own reading and observation will suggest to you, that I have omitted many passages in the inspired writings of the Old Testament, which would have thrown light upon the subject before us; having only selected some of the principal testimonies, at different periods, sufficient to confirm the fact which I have endeavoured to establish, that the church of God has, in all ages, embraced the doctrine of a future state, under the notion of the resurrection of the body.

That the same sentiments continued after these times, we have the evidence of the apocryphal writers. I shall only extract two passages from them, which come up fully to the point. In the second book of Esdras, God is introduced, as giving directions to the Jews, in several points of their religious conduct; one of which enjoins the pious care of their dead: *Wheresoever thou findest the dead, take them, and bury them, and I will give thee the first place in my resurrection*. (Verse 23.) And agreeably to this, Judas is said, in the second book of Maccabæus, xii. 43. *to have taken up the bodies of the slain*

and buried them, in that he was mindful of the resurrection.

When our blessed Saviour came into the world, he found the Jews in possession of the same opinion. None but the Sadducees, who were distinguished more by their rank than by their numbers, had renounced it. And this they did in consequence of their disbelief of any future state at all. For they conceived, as the rest of the Jews did, that the doctrine of a future state implied the doctrine of a resurrection. That this doctrine was received by all other Jews, we have the testimony of St. Paul, in his apology before king Agrippa. *I stand, says he, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our Twelve Tribes, the whole body of the Jews, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come*. (Acts, xxvi. 6, 7.) What this promise was, is clearly intimated in the words immediately following: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?* I may farther observe, that this passage, which mentions the resurrection as a promise made by God unto the fathers, is likewise a support of the general argument of this discourse. And I shall now close the whole evidence produced in this case, with St. Paul's express confirmation of it in another place, viz. the 11th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. He there declares, that the faith of all the pious and good men, who had lived from the beginning of the world, and which had supported many of them in their integrity against all the cruelties and tortures that malicious wickedness could invent, rested upon this principle, "that they might obtain a better resurrection."

But it may be asked, how is this doctrine consistent with the assertion, *that life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel*, through the resurrection of Christ, and the preaching of his Apostles? I answer, that the expression of being brought to light, according to the true import of the original word *φανέρωσις*, does not mean the first discovery of a thing, but the throwing a clearer and stronger light upon it. The Patriarchs saw, by faith, what was shewn to them at

a distance, through prophecies and types, which were to them as lights, directing their eyes to heaven, though shining in a dark place, till the Day-star arose, and diffused a brighter and more general light. The true state of the case is this : in all the ancient notices given of a resurrection, there is likewise an intimation given, that it should be brought to pass by a person who should appear in the world with power, to abolish death and regain his conquests. The whole, indeed, of this wonderful dispensation had not been revealed. That a redemption from the grave, and a great salvation, was to be wrought by the Messiah, for the people of God, was foretold, believed, and expected. But that it had been determined in the fore-knowledge and counsels of God, even before the world began, that an atonement should be made for the sins of the whole world, by the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, and immortality restored, by the power of his resurrection, to all mankind, this was a mystery kept secret from men and angels, before it was revealed in the accomplishment. The superior knowledge, therefore, gained in this point, by the Christian revelation, lies in this : that we have actually seen the confirmation of the promises given to the fathers by the coming of the great Redeemer himself : that, by having raised himself from the grave, we now that he has the power of the resurrection, and is, as he emphatically styles himself, *the resurrection and the life* ; and that, by his resurrection, he has indeed gained and proclaimed the victory over the great enemy of mankind, which was foretold from the beginning of the world, and expected by the church of God through all the ages of it. They looked for immortality through a Redeemer, by promise : we have seen the Redeemer himself, and through him have the covenant of immortality actually conveyed to us.

The result of all that has been said, is this : When the Apostles preached Jesus and the resurrection, they preached no novel doctrine. These had been the desire and the expectation of ages. All the pious and good men that ever lived, who retained the religion of their first parent,

and looked for the redemption, of which he had received the promise, expected their part in it by means of a Redeemer, who, through the mighty power of God, would raise their bodies again from the dust, to a life incorruptible and immortal. So that, when we profess to believe in the resurrection of the body, we profess the primitive faith of the church of God ; and we embrace the doctrine of a future state, under the same notion, that all, who were willing to receive eternal life as the gift of God, ever did embrace it, namely, that of the re-union of the soul and body after death. And, as our Lord's resurrection fulfilled the promises given to the preceding generations, so these promises, recorded in the sacred writings, are a standing confirmation of the evidence of those eye-witnesses upon which the faith and hopes of the succeeding generations were established. They cannot have a stronger support than one which was nearly coeval with the world, has subsisted through all the ages of it, and has all the strength that the concurrence of human and divine testimony can give to any article of faith.

There is yet one more important observation to be made. The gospel informs us, that the resurrection will be general : *that all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works*. Not only the righteous, of which the true church of God has in all ages consisted, shall be raised to life eternal, but the wicked also *shall go into everlasting punishment*. How greatly, therefore, does it concern us all, so to prepare ourselves against this tremendous day, that we may be able to give our accounts with joy ! that when *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, we may be found to have qualified ourselves both in body and soul, by virtue and holiness, and every Christian grace that can purify and refine our nature, for that glorious transfiguration which will make us like *unto the angels of God in heaven, and fit us for an admission into the presence of God, where there is the fulness of joy, and pleasure inconceivable for evermore*.

S E R M O N. LXXVI.

The Works of Nature full of Intellectual and Moral Instruction.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at Christ Church, Rogation Sunday, May 16th, 1773.]

MATT. vi. 28.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

THERE is nothing which can fill the mind of man with a more noble and exalted pleasure than the contemplation of the wonderful works of the creation; as there is nothing which can give greater proof of a contracted and abject spirit, than to be daily conversant with, and yet stupidly insensible of, the amazing miracles of nature. The world was not made by a wise and beneficent Creator; that the wonders of it should open themselves to eyes that see not, or display themselves unregarded to its incurious inhabitants. It is indeed principally for the pleasure of him by whom all things exist, that *they are, and were created; who rejoiceth in his works*—in surveying that structure which Omnipotence alone could raise. But they are likewise designed to communicate happiness, not only in the sensual gratification, but in the intellectual and moral improvement of mankind. To the mind that can relish enjoyments superior to those of sense, they will afford the most rational entertainment; and to him that is not barely satisfied with a fruitless admiration of things, they will suggest such reflections as will make him both wiser and better. At the same time that they *feed* his imagination, they will enlarge his understanding and meliorate his heart.

Whatever part of the creation we cast our eyes upon, we shall find written therein ample lessons of instruction. Would we contemplate and adore the inexpressible greatness and majesty of the Most High, let us look up unto the heavens, which are *spread over us like a curtain*: they loudly declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. It openly sheweth it even to the rude and illiterate; and the mind, which is improved by science, may for ever expand

itself in the immensity of the prospect.—If we descend to this lower world, what a scene discloses itself for rational and religious contemplation? *The earth hangeth*, in Job's expression, *upon nothing*; and by an invisible hand is directed to perform its revolutions; so as to diversify the seasons in their order, and give a regular succession of light and heat to cherish every part of the globe. How beautifully is the surface of it clothed in a green vesture, grateful to the eye, and pouring forth sustenance to man and to the creatures subservient to his use! There is not a single part of it, or a living thing that moveth upon the face of it, from which we may not gather instruction, if we will follow the method of reasoning frequently made use of in holy writ. Various parts of the irrational and inanimate creation are held forth by the wisdom of God, to direct the beings of reason in the way that they should go. The prophet reproves the ingratitude of the rebellious Israelites, by upbraiding them with the dutiful behaviour and fidelity of domestic animals. *The ox*, says he, *knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider.* And the wise man sends the indolent and slothful to learn industry from the example of an inconsiderable insect; *Go*, says he, *to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.* Our blessed Saviour descends to a yet lower class in the scale of nature, and frequently sets before us even things inanimate, to convey us to the most important and useful lessons of divine instruction. In his parables he makes use of the lifeless emblems, of seed sown, of a fig-tree, of a grain of mustard-seed, to disclose the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And in my text, and the verses before it, not merely by way of illustration, but as a precept to instruct, and as a motive to persuade, he directs his disciples to look up to the fowls of the air, and observe how they are fed, and to *consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.*

The particular instruction they were to learn from the fowls of the air, to depend upon God for sustenance; and from the lilies of the field, to have a

like dependance upon him for raiment, seems to have been peculiar to the singular circumstances of his disciples. As they were to be engaged in an office which would sequester them altogether from the busy affairs of the world, they were to throw themselves entirely upon the care of Providence, and not to concern themselves about making provision for their support in the usual way, necessary for the rest of mankind. They were *not to provide gold, or silver, or brass, in their purses; nor scrip for their journey; neither two coats; neither shoes nor yet staves.* They were to trust for the supply of all their wants to God's more immediate care, who knew that *the workman was worthy of his meat*, and would not fail to feed and clothe them as providentially as he fed the ravens and clothed the lilies. Our situation and circumstances being very different from theirs, and the application of the command in the text belonging to us no further than as a caution against anxious and immoderate concern for the things of this life, in distrust of God's good providence, I shall consider it in a more enlarged view. And because, at this particular season (being the days of rogation) we are directed to admonish the people to behold the natural produce of the earth in that variety of plants, and grains, and fruits, with which the surface of it is overspread, and to give thanks to God, in beholding them, for their increase and abundance, from whence arises such an ample provision for the sustenance, accommodation, and gratification of man, I shall extend the precept of *considering the lilies of the field, how they grow*, to the consideration of the growth of all those other products of the earth, which are raised from it in the same wonderful manner, by the all-bountiful hand of God.

This subject will furnish us with a variety of religious reflections. And, in the first place, it will lead us to admire and adore the infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness of God.

I. There is not a single creature in the universe that is not wonderfully made. All its constituent parts are put together with the most exact symmetry, and the

most perfect contrivance. The more minutely and accurately they are examined, the more finished they appear, and disgrace every admired work of the most ingenious human artificer. Every object that is most familiar to us, every common appearance in nature, is the effect of a miraculous power. The formation and growth of a plant is to us an inexplicable mystery. A blade of corn or a spire of grass is not only beyond the power of man to produce or imitate, but it will defy the researches of the most subtle philosopher to account for or explain the manner of its existence. Who can take upon him to shew how the several particles of matter, collected from all the various elements, and suited to this particular purpose, arrange themselves, and gradually and imperceptibly unite in that wonderful order, which is necessary for the structure of every plant, according to the laws which the great Author of nature has prescribed them? Who can survey in this structure of them without amazement, the infinite number of fibres and fine vessels that are discoverable in every plant; the curious disposition of all these; the ways and channels contrived for the reception and distribution of nourishment; the effect this nourishment has, in extending its parts and bringing it to its full growth and expansion; in repairing its annual decays and preserving life? How wonderful is their propagation? With what contrivance and care are their seeds brought up to maturity? And how amazing is their increase for the preservation of every species, that none of the works of God, how perishable soever in their nature, might be blotted out of the creation? And where is the store-house of this infinite variety and number of seeds? Are they laid up for use in the great magazine of water, which Thales thought to be the principle and seminary of all things? If so; of what shape, dimensions, and contrivance are those invisible strainers, peculiar to every distinct species of plants, which admit no other than their own proper seeds for the invariable continuance of all the tribes of them, without the least confusion, as they came originally out of the hands of their Maker; insomuch, that the seed of the

smallest herb that creepeth upon the wall, cannot find an entrance into the spacious branches of the cedar of Lebanon? Or does every seed inclose in its little seedplant another seed, and so on continually, insomuch, that as many trees or plants are contained in it as might be produced to the end of the world? Impossible as it is for us to represent to our imagination such an inconceivable number and minuteness, yet there is no impossibility in the thing itself; as may evidently appear from this very just observation of an ingenious naturalist; viz. "That those who are accustomed to exercise themselves in natural and mathematical sciences, know that they can seldom go far without meeting something infinite; as if the Author of nature had been pleased to fix the seal of his chief property upon all his works." But to proceed:

As the frame and texture of plants is so admirably well contrived for the reception of proper nourishment, and the conveyance of it to every part, so the manner of their being supplied therewith is no less miraculous. Their roots would neither fix themselves in the earth, nor their fibres branch out, nor their vessels swell, nor their leaves unfold themselves, did not the vapours ascend and form themselves above in clouds, and fall again by condensation, in order to feed the plants below with wholesome dews and showers, which descend in drops as from a watering pot upon a garden. The consideration of this kindly source of the earth's fertility, called forth these melodious strains from the sweet singer of Israel;—*Thou visitest the earth and blessest it; thou makest it very plenteous. Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof, thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy clouds drop fatness.*—All these things are wonderful, and they only cease to be so by being obvious and familiar. It is the regular course of what we call nature, that excludes the author and conductor of it from our thoughts; and we are seldom disposed to think upon God, till we are awakened and alarmed by something unusual and astonishing.

But wisdom will listen to the still voice of nature; and in surveying the works of God, will find out their Maker in all of them. We cannot indeed by searching find out the Almighty to perfection, nor can we in any wise comprehend the amazing mechanism of his works; but by a due contemplation of them, we shall arrive at a knowledge more proper and useful for us: we shall be taught to discern, magnify, and adore the great Creator, who is mighty beyond imagination in power and in wisdom, whose ways are unsearchable, and whose contrivance is in the formation of the minutest herb past finding out.

And if the wonderful contrivance in the structure of every single plant, will lead us to a pious and holy adoration of the power and wisdom of him that is thus mighty in operation, how shall we worthily magnify and bless the goodness of God, who, with a bountiful hand, has scattered that beautiful and useful variety of them over the face of the whole

Whatever can contribute to the service or pleasure of man; whatever is necessary for the comfort as well as the support of life; the earth brings forth in abundance, and pays as a tribute to man, to whom dominion is given over all that is therein. How is the surface of it spread over, "as a table well furnished with a variety of delicate herbs, fruits, and grains, to nourish our bodies, to please our tastes, to enliven our spirits, and to cure our diseases!" God himself at the creation of them was graciously pleased to declare, that for the use of man, and for his nourishment and support, they were all originally designed. Behold, says he to Adam, *I have given you every herb, bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree bearing seed, to you it shall be for meat.* How gracious is the Lord and merciful to be thus mindful of man, whilst he is too often regardless of his benefactor; and who bountifully fills the mouths of those who forget to think of him, and to praise him for his goodness to the children of men. Though he opens the doors of heaven, and rains down plenty upon the earth, though the clouds drop fatness, and the valleys stand so thick

with corn, that they shall laugh and sing, yet how frequently does the ingratitude of man receive this profusion of goodness, without once reflecting upon the hand that scatters it, or blessing the Author of the increase!

But we have still greater reason to adore the bountiful Creator of all things, in that he has not only commanded the earth largely to supply us with the necessities of life for our comfortable subsistence, but even with a superfluity of delicacies for our delight. How are our senses, those inlets of pleasure, regaled with the enjoyment of the kind entertainments nature sets before us! How comfortable and refreshing is the fragrantcy of herbs and flowers and spices to the smell! How pleasing is the delicacy of plants and fruits to the organs of taste! And what spectacles of delight do every where present themselves to our eyes, in the cheerful verdure and gay embroidery of the fields! If we consider the lilies, how they grow, and reflect that they put on their beautiful raiment and perfume the air to gratify our senses, to entertain our fancy, and to multiply our innocent pleasures, surely some reasonable sentiments should arise, some returns of acknowledgement and gratitude should be paid to our indulgent Creator, who has diversified and embellished the scene for our better entertainment and refreshment in our passage, in our weary pilgrimage through life.

II. But there is another reflection to succeed, which will darken the scene, and cast a shade over the objects we behold. Thankful as we ought to be to God's good providence, for having placed us in a fruitful land, and pleasant habitation, yet we must remember, that the earth is not that paradise which once it was. It has undergone a melancholy change; and we ought never to be unmindful of the cause of it, nor can we sufficiently detest it. It was sin, alas! that introduced this deplorable alteration, and at once corrupted man, and deformed the world.—God created man, and placed him in Eden, the garden of delights; where the ground of its own accord satisfied every desire, and supplied him with all the luxuries of nature. Labour was unnecessary to cultivate,

(except so much of "the sweet garden toil, as made ease more easy,") and art was superfluous to adorn his possessions. The earth was obedient to the commands of God, which prevented his pains; and the same Providence which formed the garden, would have preserved it in its original perfection. It was all his own. The Lord God, to shew his unlimited bounty and goodness to man, had commanded him, saying, *of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; only as an acknowledgement of the dependence he had upon his Creator, and as a test of his obedience, from tasting of one particular fruit he was debarred; of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* But man did eat, and the terrible consequences immediately ensued. *Cursed be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.* This dreadful punishment of Adam's transgression is so deeply rooted in the earth, that it is felt in no small degree, by his wretched posterity, to this day. For however ingenious or plausible the opinion may be, which is founded in Lamech's giving the name of Noah to his son, (Gen. v. 29.) importing *comfort concerning the work and toil of his hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed*, and which supposes, that the curse was actually taken off from the ground in his days, yet it is far from being reconcileable to present appearances. The life of the husbandman contradicts this notion, which is not a life of pleasing exercise and amusement, but of toil and travail. Those whose employment it is to till the ground will tell you, that they rise up early and go late to rest, and daily undergo great pains and weariness to force a subsistence from the earth. It is by the sweat of their brows that we gain our bread; and, after all, how often is their labour vain, and their expectations blasted, by unfruitful seasons, and the ungrateful barrenness of the soil! Hence are the

cries of thousands for their daily bread, and the land becomes solitary through famine. I cannot upon this occasion omit the observation of a curious foreign writer upon the subject of the products of the earth, viz. "That the earth seems to have preserved its whole strength, nor does its fruitfulness appear by any means to be diminished with respect to its production of thorns and thistles, and an infinite number of other ill weeds; but that it grows weak and lean, and wants reparation and recruit in the produce of corn and those herbs that are necessary for our food and sustenance." How this come to pass, he owns he cannot conceive; nor indeed is it to be accounted for upon any natural principles. Nothing but the original curse of the ground announced a second time unto Cain, in these words, *it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength*, could have given us the true solution of this remarkable phenomenon. The use to be made of these reflections is apparent and obvious. They shew the malignant nature of sin, and how odious it is in the sight of God. They ought therefore to fill us with the utmost abhorrence and detestation of it, since it has, by the righteous judgment of God, deformed the face of nature, and introduced all the labour, and toil, and trouble, that is in the world. Nay, the consequences of it have been still more pernicious; sin is the parent of diseases and death.

III. This will suggest a third reflection arising from the subject before us. When the life of man is frequently in scripture compared to a short-lived plant; *when all flesh is said to be grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field*, we readily agree to the comparison, and allow the emblem to be just. The beginning, and progress, and end of human life, resemble the origin, and growth and decay of a plant. We both of us, at first, arose from one common parent—the earth; into which we shall be again resolved, *for dust we are, and to dust shall we return*. If we are not blasted in the bud of life; or if, through the weakness of the frame and constitution, we are not bowed down again to the ground, still as we grow up, we are

continually exposed to the storms and tempests that beat upon us and break us down. Or should we be permitted to arrive at our full proportion of strength and height, and escape those diseases which impair our bloom, and those accidents which lie in wait to destroy us, yet in the course of nature how soon do our organs decay, are the fountains of life dried up, do our honours fall from our heads, and we languish, fade, and die! These reflections, we must be convinced, belong equally to the whole human race. No station, or condition, or age, is out of the reach of the comparison. The great and the mighty fall like other men; nor are they more safe from violence than from natural death; as the tallest tree in the forest is oftentimes torn up by winds, or shivered by lightning. The decays of age are visible to every eye; nor is the vigour of youth secure against the sudden stroke of noxious and pestilential blasts. A reasonable admonition this to check all vain and self-flattering thoughts in the young, the gay, and the florid! Let them take in the whole of the comparison, and they will know, that if they resemble the lily in its beautiful raiment and appearance, they resemble it likewise too nearly in duration. In the morning they grow up and flourish, in the evening they wither—how sorrowful are the remembrances, that even long before the evening of life, they are often scorched and die!

IV. The last observation I shall make is this: That as the consideration of the plants and flowers of the field will furnish us with a striking picture of man's mortality, so, on the other hand, it will suggest to him the comfortable assurance of his restoration to another life. When we see the annual returns of cold shut up the passages of life in plants, and deprive them of that supply of juices which caused them to grow up and flourish on the earth; when the grass faileth, and there is no green thing, but every herb shall sicken and die, and every tree become a lifeless trunk; and yet when we behold them all revive at the return of the genial spring; when we see the face of the earth renewed in the same beautiful manner it was, and a new

creation, as it were, open upon us; why should there be any physical difficulties in the doctrine of a resurrection? why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? Is it at all more difficult for him, by an extraordinary act of his almighty power, to collect the scattered particles of dust, and re-unite them in that order, symmetry, and proportion, which is requisite to form the human frame; than it is by a general law (which is only the constant but no less wonderful, operation of the same power) to recall the distant and undivided particles of inactive matter into such a disposition and arrangement, as shall give to a flower the same variegated complexion, and cause it to breathe the same essences it did before? The illustration which St. Paul uses in support of the doctrine of a resurrection, and likewise as an argument to put a stop to all vain and trifling disquisitions concerning the manner how it shall be brought to pass, is taken from a grain of corn, that is buried, dead, and corrupted in the earth, and yet shoots forth into new life, and has life more abundantly. *But some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.* As if he had said, "Explain to me, if thou art able, the most common appearance in nature. Tell me, how the seed which thou sowest in the ground, and there moulders and rots, should, from an unknown and imperceptible principle, rise, as it were, again from the grave into new life, multiplied an hundred fold, without the least deviation from its own form and body? If thou canst not tell me this, why dost thou foolishly inquire concerning the incomprehensible ways of God in giving life to the dead; and why dost thou perplex thyself with impious doubts, in a matter which thy own experience and daily observation will teach thee is not to be conceived or explained?" This illustration of the case had been before made use of by our blessed Saviour himself, in John, xii. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth*

much fruit. Which words, in their application to the resurrection of the dead, have, according to the observation of the religious philosopher, a very curious and remarkable propriety: "Whereas," says he, other seeds rise again out of the ground, and become seed-leaves of the plant; that of wheat is almost the only one in nature which dies in the earth; and therefore was the most proper emblem to represent the dissolution of man, and his revival."

The proofs of a resurrection stand upon the most solid and immoveable foundations; but arguments addressed to the ignorance of gainsayers, are very proper and sufficient to silence the petulance of bold and presumptuous inquirers, who dare to call in question the almighty power of God in the restoration of life, and yet cannot but see something analogous to it, and equally incomprehensible, in the most common productions of nature.—Let the false pretender to philosophy distract himself with needless questions, which are far above the reach of the human capacity to resolve. The good and humble Christian can easily satisfy himself, by leaving every inexplicable difficulty to God himself, whose infinite power over the works of his own hands is not to be measured or limited by the narrow conceptions of vain and aspiring man.

But where natural knowledge fails, that which is religious will still abound. We have enough of the former to answer all the purposes of life, and that is sufficient for us. Nevertheless, we ought to improve ourselves in it by contemplation and study; for though it will be still defective, and leave many things utterly unknown to us, yet the further we advance in it, the greater wonders we shall discover in all the works of God, and shall be led thereby to a more enlarged knowledge and devout adoration of his being and attributes, of his inconceivable power, and wisdom, and goodness.

And as the wisdom of God has thought fit in his holy word to draw variety of religious instructions from the consideration of his works, and frequently sends us to learn our duty from the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation, we ought not to be ashamed to go to the

school of nature, and to get understanding from the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field; since they are able to read us wise lectures of morality, and to improve us even in the virtues of a Christian. They will teach us dependence upon Providence, and gratitude to it for our daily support, for the regular supplies of food and raiment. They will teach us a lesson which many of the philosophers could not teach us, that we are not only the constant, but the peculiar care of Providence; and that if a sparrow doth not fall to the ground without his notice, how much more will he have a watchful eye over his favourite creature man, and not suffer him to wander unnoticed, unguided, unprotected! They will teach us what all should remember, and are all apt to forget, how frail we are, how precarious our existence is in this world, how momentary our duration. But they will also teach us, that life will rise out of corruption; that we shall spring up with fresh recruits from the grave, like seed buried in the ground; and shall be invested with light in more glorious raiment than the lilies. Such knowledge as this lies open to the wayfaring man; it grows in every field, and meets us in all our paths. And it is the most important knowledge that the wisest of men can pursue or gain; it is that which will make us wise unto salvation.*

Thoughts and meditations of this kind, though they are proper for all men who have the lively scenes of nature displayed before their eyes, are yet more peculiarly adapted to the situation of those, who not only enjoy the shades and serenity of an academical life, but whose studies are designed and well calculated to enlarge their views of nature, to discover the hand of God in his largest and minutest works, and to teach them to magnify and adore him in all the wonders of his creation. This is the employment and delight of the angels themselves, who sang hymns of praises when they were first brought forth, and must for ever rejoice in the contemplation of them, though doubtless they are, in many respects, too wonderful even for their comprehension. Surely then it must be a most rational, and pleasing,

and honourable employment for those who have leisure and opportunity, to acquaint themselves with God in his works; and especially such as were made for the use, and convenience, and gratification of man.

It would be stupidity not to know the value of his gifts; and ingratitude, not to apply them with thankfulness to the purposes for which they were bestowed. And we should much undervalue them, were we to think, that they were given merely to satisfy the animal part of man, and not likewise for the much greater advantages of his improvement in his intellectual and moral endowments. They were designed to exercise, and open, and enlarge his mental faculties; and they will find ample employment for his most curious researches. But, after all, the pursuit of science, that bears no fruit, and tends to no wise end, is a vain and useless toil, and terminates in pride and folly. It is the religious application of knowledge that makes it valuable, and giveth true wisdom and understanding. Could we measure the heavens, and tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names, without looking up to their Creator, and magnifying and adoring the immensity of his power, and wisdom, and goodness; our knowledge would be worse, and much more criminal, than ignorance. Or could we speak like Solomon of every herb, from the cedar which is in Lebanon, unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; could we recount the names of all their tribes, and distinguish all their properties; and should we yet overlook the hand and design of Providence in their formation, and not direct our contemplation of them to the praise and glory of God, we should only foolishly indulge a fruitless curiosity, and return empty and unfurnished from the spacious fields of science.

God is visible in all his works, and therefore let us glorify him in all. The heavens and the earth, the day and the night, summer and winter, the mountains and the valleys, fruitful trees and all cedars, and all green things upon the earth, proclaim his being and providence, do him homage, and praise him, and magnify him for ever. Such is the language

of Scripture; but they can only supply materials of adoration to intelligent beings, and it is through the mouth of man that their songs of praise must be conveyed. Let us therefore magnify him with thanksgiving, tell of all his wondrous work, and sing praises unto him with understanding. Let us give utterance to all the works of nature, and we shall all speak the same language, and join with one voice in this triumphant acclamation, *Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches! And worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive honour, and glory, and power; for thou hast created all things for thy glory; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, be rendered all honour, and glory, and praise, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON LXXVII.

By the Rt. Rev. JOSEPH BUTLER,
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On the Government of the Tongue.

JAMES, 1. 26.

If a man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

THE translation of this text would be more determined by being more literal, thus: *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* This determines that the words, *but deceiveth his own heart*, are not put in opposition to *seemeth to be religious*, but to *bridleth not his tongue*. The certain determinate meaning of the text then being, that he who seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but in that particular deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain; we may observe somewhat very forcible and expressive in these words of St. James. As if the apostle had said, no man surely can

make any pretences to religion, who doth not at least believe that he bridleth his tongue: if he puts on any appearance and face of religion, and yet does not govern his tongue, he must surely deceive himself in that particular, and think he does: and whoever is so unhappy as to deceive himself in this, to imagine he keeps that unruly faculty in due subjection, when indeed he does not, whatever the other part of his life be, his religion is vain; the government of the tongue being a most material restraint which virtue lays us under: without it no man can be truly religious. In treating upon this subject I will consider,

I. What is the general vice or fault here referred to: or what disposition in men is supposed in moral reflections and precepts concerning *bridling the tongue*.

II. When it may be said of any one, that he has a due government over himself in this respect.

I. Now the fault referred to, and the disposition supposed, in precepts and reflections concerning the government of the tongue, is not evil-speaking from malice, nor lying or bearing false witness from indirect selfish designs. The disposition to these, and the actual vices themselves, all come under other subjects. The tongue may be employed about, and made to serve, all the purposes of vice, in tempting and deceiving, in perjury and injustice. But the thing here supposed and referred to is talkativeness: a disposition to be talking, abstracted from the consideration of what is to be said, with very little or no regard to, or thought of doing, either good or harm. And let not any imagine this to be a slight matter, and that it deserves not to have so great weight laid upon it, till he has considered what evil is implied in it, and the bad effects which follow from it. It is perhaps true, that they who are addicted to this folly, would choose to confine themselves to trifles and indifferent subjects, and so intend only to be guilty of being impertinent: but as they cannot go on for ever talking of nothing, as common matters will not afford sufficient fund for perpetual continued discourse; when subjects of this kind are exhausted, they will go on to defamation, scandal, divulging of secrets, their own secrets as well as those

of others, any thing rather than be silent. They are plainly hurried on in the heat of their talk to say quite different things from what they first intended, and which they afterwards wish unsaid; or improper things, which they had no other end in saying but only to afford employment to their tongue. And if these people expect to be heard and regarded, for there are some content merely with talking, they will invent, to engage your attention: and, when they have heard the least imperfect hint of an affair, they will out of their own head add circumstances of time and place, and other matters, to make out their story, and give the appearance of probability to it: not that they have any concern about being believed, otherwise than as a means of being heard. The thing is, to engage your attention; to take you up wholly for the present time; what reflections will be made afterwards, is in truth the least of their thoughts. And further, when persons, who indulge themselves in these liberties of the tongue, are in any degree offended with another, as little disgusts and misunderstandings will be, they allow themselves to defame and revile such an one without any moderation or bounds; though the offence is so very slight, that they themselves would not do, nor perhaps wish him an injury in any other way. And in this case the scandal and revilings are chiefly owing to talkativeness, and not briding their tongue; and so come under our present subject. The least occasion in the world will make the humour break out in this particular way, or in another. It is like a torrent, which must and will flow; but the least thing imaginable will first of all give it either this or another direction, turn it into this or that channel: or like a fire, the nature of which, when in a heap of combustible matter, is to spread and lay waste all around; but any one of a thousand little accidents will occasion it to break out first either in this or another particular part.

The subject then before us, though it does run up into, and can scarce be treated as entirely distinct from all others; yet it needs not be so much mixed or blended with them as it often is. Every faculty and power may be used as the in-

strument of premeditated vice and wickedness, merely as the most proper and effectual means of executing such designs. But if a man, from deep malice and desire of revenge, should meditate a falsehood with a settled design to ruin his neighbour's reputation, and should with great coolness and deliberation spread it, nobody would choose to say of such an one, that he had no government of his tongue. A man may use the faculty of speech as an instrument of false witness, who yet has so entire a command over that faculty, as never to speak but from forethought and cool design. Here the crime is injustice and perjury; and, strictly speaking, no more belongs to the present subject, than perjury and injustice in any other way. But there is such a thing as a disposition to be talking for its own sake; from which persons often say any thing, good or bad, of others, merely as a subject of discourse, according to the particular temper they themselves happen to be in, and to pass away the present time. There is likewise to be observed in persons such a strong and eager desire of engaging attention to what they say, that they will speak good or evil, truth or otherwise, merely as one or the other seems to be most hearkened to: and this, though it is sometimes joined, is not the same with the desire of being thought important and men of consequence. There is in some such a disposition to be talking, that an offence of the slightest kind, and such as would not raise any other resentment, yet raises, if I may so speak, the resentment of the tongue, puts it into a flame, into the most ungovernable motions. This outrage, when the person it respects is present, we distinguish in the lower rank of people by a peculiar term: and let it be observed, that though the decencies of behaviour are a little kept, the same outrage and virulence, indulged when he is absent, is an offence of the same kind. But not to distinguish any further in this manner: men run into faults and follies, which cannot so properly be referred to any one general head as this, that they have not a due government over their tongue.

And this unrestrained volubility and wantonness of speech is the occasion of numberless evils and vexations of life.

begets resentment in him who is the subject of it; sows the seed of strife and dissention amongst others; and inflames little disgusts and offences, which if let alone would wear away of themselves: it is often of as bad effect upon the good name of others, as deep envy or malice: and, to say the least of it in this respect, it destroys and perverts a certain equity of the utmost importance to society to be observed; namely, that praise and dispraise, a good or bad character, should always be bestowed according to desert. The tongue used in such a licentious manner is like a sword in the hand of a madman; it is employed at random, it can scarce possibly do any good, and for the most part does a world of mischief; and implies not only great folly and a trifling spirit, but great viciousness of mind, great indifference to truth and falsity, and to the reputation, welfare, and good of others. So much reason is there for what St. James says of the tongue, chap. iii. 5, 6. *It is a fire, a world of iniquity; it depleth the whole body, setteth on fire the course of nature, and is itself set on fire of hell.* This is the faculty or disposition which we are required to keep a guard upon: these are the vices and follies it runs into, when not kept under due restraint.

II. Wherein the due government of the tongue consists, or when it may be said of any one in a moral and religious sense that he *bridleth his tongue*, I come now to consider;

The due and proper use of any natural faculty or power, is to be judged of by the end and design for which it was given us. The chief purpose for which the faculty of speech was given to man, is plainly that we might communicate our thoughts to each other, in order to carry on the affairs of the world; for business, and for our improvement in knowledge and learning. But the good Author of our nature designed us not only necessities, but likewise enjoyment and satisfaction, in that being he hath graciously given, and in that condition of life he hath placed us in. There are secondary uses of our faculties; they admit to delight, as well as to necessity, and as they are equally adapted to

both, there is no doubt but he intended them for our gratification, as well as for the support and continuance of our being. The secondary use of speech is to please and be entertaining to each other in conversation. This is in every respect allowable and right: it unites men closer in alliances and friendships; gives us a fellow-feeling of the prosperity and happiness of each other, and is in several respects serviceable to virtue, and to promote good behaviour in the world. And provided there be not too much time spent in it, if it were considered only in the way of gratification and delight, men must have strange notions of God and of religion, to think that he can be offended with it, or that it is any way inconsistent with the strictest virtue. But the truth is, such sort of conversation, though it has no particular good tendency, yet it has a general good one: it is social and friendly, and tends to promote humanity, good nature, and civility.

As the end and use, so likewise the abuse, of speech, relates to the one or other of these; either to business or to conversation. As to the former, deceit in the management of business and affairs does not properly belong to the subject now before us: though one may just mention that multitude, that endless number, of words with which business is perplexed; when a much fewer would, as it should seem, better serve the purpose: but this must be left to those who understand the matter. The government of the tongue, considered as a subject of itself, relates chiefly to conversation: to that kind of discourse which usually fills up the time spent in friendly meetings, and visits of civility. And the danger is, lest persons entertain themselves and others at the expence of their wisdom and their virtue, and to the injury or offence of their neighbour. If they will observe and keep clear of these, they may be as free, and easy, and unreserved, as they can desire.

The cautions to be given for avoiding these dangers, and to render conversation innocent and agreeable, fall under the following particulars: silence; talking of indifferent things; and, which makes

up too great a part of conversation, giving of characters ; speaking well or evil of others.

The wise man observes, that there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence. One meets with people in this world, who seem never to have made the last of these observations. And yet these great talkers do not at all speak from their having any thing to say, as every sentence shews, but only from their inclination to be talking. Their conversation is merely an exercise of the tongue : no other human faculty has any share in it. It is strange these persons can help reflecting, that unless they have in truth a superior capacity, and are in an extraordinary manner furnished for conversation : if they are entertaining, it is at their own expence. Is it possible, that it should never come into people's thoughts to suspect, whether or not it be to their advantage to shew so very much of themselves? *O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom.* Job, xlii. 5. Remember likewise there are persons who love fewer words, an inoffensive sort of people, and who deserve some regard, though of too still and composed tempers for you. Of this number was the son of Sirach : for he plainly speaks from experience when he says, *As hills of sand are to the steps of the aged, so is one of many words to a quiet man.* But one would think it should be obvious to every one, that when they are in company with their superiors of any kind, in years, knowledge, and experience ; when proper and useful subjects are discoursed of, which they cannot bear a part in ; that these are times for silence ; when they should learn to hear, and be attentive, at least in their turn. It is indeed a very unhappy way these people are in : they in a manner cut themselves out from all advantage of conversation, except that of being entertained with their own talk : their business in coming into company not being at all to be informed, to hear, to learn ; but to display themselves, or rather to exert their faculty, and talk without any design at all. And if we consider conversation as an entertainment, as somewhat to unbend the

mind ; as a diversion from the cares, business, and the sorrows of life ; it is of the very nature of it, that the discourse be mutual. This, I say, is implied in the very notion of what we distinguish by conversation, or being in company. Attention to the continued discourse of one alone grows more painful often, than the cares and business we come to be diverted from. He therefore who imposes this upon us, is guilty of a double offence, arbitrarily enjoining silence upon all the rest, and likewise obliging them to this painful attention.

I am sensible these things are apt to be passed over, as too little to come into a serious discourse : but in reality men are obliged, even in point of morality and virtue, to observe all the decencies of behaviour. The greatest evils in life have had their rise from somewhat, which was thought of too little importance to be attended to. And as to the matter we are now upon, it is absolutely necessary to be considered. For if people will not maintain a due government over themselves, in regarding proper times and seasons for silence, but will be talking ; they certainly, whether they design it or not at first, will go on to scandal and evil-speaking, and divulging secrets.

If it were needful to say any thing further, to persuade men to learn this lesson of silence, one might put them in mind, how insignificant they render themselves by this excessive talkativeness : insomuch that, if they do chance to say any thing which deserves to be attended to and regarded, it is lost in the variety and abundance which they utter of another sort.

The occasions of silence then are obvious, and one would think should be easily distinguished by every body ; namely, when a man has nothing to say, or nothing, but what is better unsaid ; better, either in regard to the particular persons he is present with ; or from its being an interruption to conversation itself ; or to conversation of a more agreeable kind ; or better, lastly, with regard to himself. I will end this paper with two reflections of the wise man, one of which, in the strongest manner

exposes the ridiculous part of this licentiousness of the tongue; and the other the great danger and viciousness of it: *When he that is a fool walketh by the way side, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.* Ecc. x. 3. The other is, *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.* Prov. x. 19.

As to the government of the tongue, in respect to talking upon indifferent subjects: after what has been said concerning the due government of it in respect to the occasions and times for silence, there is little more necessary, than only to caution men to be fully satisfied, that the subjects are indeed of an indifferent nature; and not to spend too much time in conversation of this kind. But persons must be sure to take heed, that the subject of their discourse be at least of an indifferent nature: that it be no way offensive to virtue, religion, or good manners; that it be not of a licentious dissolute sort, this leaving always ill impressions upon the mind; that it be no way injurious or vexatious to others; and that too much time be not spent this way, to the neglect of those duties and offices of life which belong to their station and condition in the world. However, though there is not any necessity, that men should aim at being important and weighty in every sentence they speak; yet since useful subjects, at least of some kinds, are as entertaining as others, a wise man, even when he desires to unbend his mind from business, would choose that the conversation might turn upon somewhat instructive.

The last thing is, the government of the tongue, as relating to discourse of the affairs of others, and giving of characters. These are in a manner the same: and one can scarce call it an indifferent subject, because discourse upon it almost perpetually runs into somewhat criminal.

And first of all, it were very much to be wished that this did not take up so great a part of conversation; because it is indeed a subject of a very dangerous nature. Let any one consider the various interests, competitions, and little understandings which arise amongst

men; and he will soon see that he is not unprejudiced and impartial; that he is not, as I may speak, neutral enough, to trust himself with talking of the character and concerns of his neighbour, in a free, careless, and unreserved manner. There is perpetually, and often it is not attended to, a rivalry amongst people of one kind and another, in respect, to wit, beauty, learning, fortune, and that one thing will insensibly influence them to speak to the disadvantage of others, even where there is no formed malice or ill design. Since therefore it is so hard to enter into this subject without offending, the first thing to be observed is, that people should learn to decline it; to get over that strong inclination most have to be talking of the concerns and behaviour of their neighbour.

But since it is impossible that this subject should be wholly excluded conversation; and since it is necessary that the characters of men should be known; the next thing is, that it is a matter of importance what is said; and therefore, that we should be religiously scrupulous and exact to say nothing, either good or bad, but what is true. I put it thus, because it is in reality of as great importance to the good of society, that the characters of bad men should be known, as that the characters of good men should. People who are given to scandal and detraction, may indeed make an ill use of this observation; but truths which are of service towards regulating our conduct, are not to be disowned, or even concealed, because a bad use may be made of them. This however would be effectually prevented, if these two things were attended to. First, That though it is equally of bad consequence to society, that men should have either good or ill characters which they do not deserve, yet when you say somewhat good of a man which he does not deserve, there is no wrong done him in particular; whereas, when you say evil of a man which he does not deserve, here is a direct formal injury, a real piece of injustice done him. This therefore makes a wide difference; and gives us, in point of virtue, much greater latitude in speaking well than ill of others. Secondly, A good man is friendly to his

fellow-creatures, and a lover of mankind, and so will, upon every occasion, and often without any, say all the good he can of every body: but, so far as he is a good man, will never be disposed to speak evil of any, unless there be some other reason for it, besides barely that it is true. If he be charged with having given an ill character, he will scarce think it a sufficient justification of himself to say it was a true one, unless he can also give some further account how he came to do so: a just indignation against particular instances of villainy, where they are great and scandalous; or to prevent an innocent man from being deceived and betrayed, when he has great trust and confidence in one who does not deserve it. Justice must be done to every part of a subject, when we are considering it. If there be a man, who bears a fair character in the world, whom yet we know to be without faith or honesty, to be really an ill man; it must be allowed, in general, that we shall do a piece of service to society, by letting such an one's true character be known. This is no more, than what we have an instance of in our Saviour himself, (Mark, xii. 38. 40.) though he was mild and gentle beyond example. However, no words can express too strongly the caution which should be used in such a case as this.

Upon the whole matter: if people would observe the obvious occasions of silence, if they would subdue the inclination to tale-bearing, and that eager desire to engage attention, which is an original disease in some minds; they would be in little danger of offending with their tongue; and would, in a moral and religious sense, have due government over it.

I will conclude with some precepts and reflections of the son of Sirach upon this subject. *Be swift to hear: and, if thou hast understanding, answer thy neighbour: if not, lay thy hand upon thy mouth. Honour and shame is in talk. A man of an ill tongue is dangerous in his city, and he that is rash in his talk shall be hated. A wise man will hold his tongue, till he see opportunity; but a babbler and a fool will regard no time. He that useth many words shall*

be abhorred; and he that taketh to himself authority therein, shall be hated. A back-biting tongue hath disquieted many; strong cities hath it pulled down, and over-thrown the houses of great men. The tongue of a man is his fall; but if thou love to hear, thou shalt receive understanding.

S E R M O N LXXVIII.

Upon Self-Deceit.

2 SAMUEL, xii. 7.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

THESE words are the application of Nathan's parable to David, upon occasion of his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of Uriah her husband. The parable, which is related in the most beautiful simplicity, is this: ver. 1. *There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. David passes sentence, not only that there should be four-fold restitution made; but he proceeds to the rigour of justice, the man that hath done this thing shall die: and this judgment is pronounced with the utmost indignation against such an act of inhumanity; as the Lord liveth, he shall surely die: and his anger was greatly kindled against the man. And the Pro-*

phet answered, *Thou art the man.* He had been guilty of much greater inhumanity, with the utmost deliberation, thought, and contrivance. Near a year must have passed, between the time of the commission of his crimes, and the time of the Prophet's coming to him; and it does not appear from the story, that he had in all this while the least remorse or contrition.

There is not any thing, relating to men and characters, more surprising and unaccountable, than this partiality to themselves, which is observable in many; as there is nothing of more melancholy reflection, respecting morality, virtue, and religion. Hence it is that many men seem perfect strangers to their own characters. They think, and reason, and judge quite differently upon any matter relating to themselves, from what they do in cases of others where they are not interested. Hence it is one hears people exposing follies, which they themselves are eminent for; and talking with great severity against particular vices, which, if all the world be not mistaken, they themselves are notoriously guilty of. This self-ignorance and self-partiality may be in all in different degrees. It is a lower degree of it which David himself refers to in these words, *Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults.* This is the ground of that advice of Elihu to Job: *Surely it is meet to be said unto God—That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* And Solomon saw this thing in a very strong light, when he said, *he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.* This likewise was the reason why that precept, *Know thyself,* was so frequently inculcated by philosophers of old. For if it were not for that partial and fond regard to ourselves, it would certainly be no great difficulty to know our own character, what passes within the bent and bias of our mind; much less would there be any difficulty in judging rightly of our own actions. But from this partiality it frequently comes to pass, that the observation of many men's being themselves last of all acquainted with what falls out in their own families, may be applied to a

nearer home, to what passes within their own breasts.

There is plainly, in the generality of mankind, an absence of doubt or distrust, in a very great measure, as to their moral character and behaviour; and likewise a disposition to take for granted, that all is right and well with them in these respects. The former is owing to their not reflecting, not exercising their judgment upon themselves; the latter to self-love. I am not speaking of that extravagance, which is sometimes to be met with; instances of persons declaring in words at length, that they never were in the wrong, nor had ever any diffidence to the justness of their conduct, in their whole lives. No, these people are too far gone to have any thing said to them. The thing before us is indeed of this kind, but in a lower degree, and confined to the moral character; somewhat of which we must all of us have, without reflecting upon it. Now consider how long, and how grossly, a person of the best understanding might be imposed upon by one of whom he had not any suspicion, and in whom he placed an entire confidence; especially if there were friendship and real kindness in the case: surely this holds even stronger with respect to that self we are all so fond of. Hence arises in men a disregard of reproof and instruction, rules of conduct and moral discipline, which occasionally come in their way: a disregard, I say, of these; not in every respect, but in this single one, namely, as what may be of service to them in particular towards mending their own hearts and tempers, and making them better men. It never in earnest comes into their thoughts, whether such admonitions may not relate, and be of service to themselves; and this quite distinct from a positive persuasion to the contrary, a persuasion from reflection that they are innocent and blameless in those respects. Thus we may invert the observation which is somewhere made upon Brutus, that he never read but in order to make himself a better man. It scarce comes into the thoughts of the generality of mankind, that this use is to be made of moral reflections which they meet with; that

this use, I say, is to be made of them by themselves, for every body observes and wonders that it is not done by others.

Further, there are instances of persons having so fixed and steady an eye upon their own interest, whatever they place it in, and the interest of those whom they consider as themselves, as in a manner to regard nothing else; their views are almost confined to this alone. Now we cannot be acquainted with, or in any propriety of speech be said to know, any thing but what we attend to. If therefore they attend only to one side, they really will not, cannot see or know what is to be alleged on the other. Though a man hath the best eyes in the world, he cannot see any way but that which he turns them. Thus these persons, without passing over the least, the most minute thing which can possibly be urged in favour of themselves, shall overlook entirely the plainest and most obvious things on the other side. And whilst they are under the power of this temper, thought and consideration, upon the matter before them, has scarce any tendency to set them right: because they are engaged, and their deliberation concerning an action to be done, or reflection upon it afterwards, is not to see whether it be right, but to find out reasons to justify or palliate it; palliate it, not to others, but to themselves.

In some there is to be observed a general ignorance of themselves, and wrong way of thinking and judging in every thing relating to themselves; their fortune, reputation, every thing in which self can come in: and this perhaps attended with the rightest judgment in all other matters. In others this partiality is not so general, has not taken hold of the whole man, but is confined to some particular favourite passion, interest, or pursuit; suppose ambition, covetousness, or any other. And these persons may probably judge and determine what is perfectly just and proper, even in things in which they themselves are concerned, if those things have no relation to their particular favourite passion or pursuit. Hence arises that amazing incongruity, and seeming inconsistency of character, from whence slight observers take it for granted, that the whole is hypocritical

and false; not being able otherwise to reconcile the several parts: whereas in truth there is real honesty, so far as it goes. There is such a thing as men's being honest to such a degree, and in such respects, but no further. And this, as it is true, so it is absolutely necessary to be taken notice of, and allowed them; such general and undistinguished censure of their whole characters, as designing and false, being one main thing which confirms them in their self-deceit. They know that the whole censure is not true; and so take for granted that no part of it is.

But to go on with the explanation of the thing itself: Vice in general consists in having an unreasonable and too great regard to ourselves, in comparison of others. Robbery and murder are never from the love of injustice and cruelty, but to gratify some other passion, to gain some supposed advantage: and it is false selfishness alone, whether cool or passionate, which makes a man resolutely pursue that end, be it ever so much to the injury of another. But whereas, in common and ordinary wickedness, this unreasonableness, this partiality and selfishness relates only, or chiefly, to the temper and passions, in the characters we are now considering, it reaches to the understanding, and influences the very judgment. And, besides that general want of distrust and diffidence concerning our own character, there are, you see, two things, which may thus prejudice and darken the understanding itself: that overfondness for ourselves, which we are all so liable to; and also being under the power of any particular passion or appetite, or engaged in any particular pursuit. And these, especially the last of the two, may be in so great a degree, as to influence our judgment, even of other persons and their behaviour. Thus a man, whose temper is formed to ambition or covetousness, shall even approve of them sometimes in others.

This seems to be in a good measure the account of self-partiality and self-deceit, when traced up to its original. Whether it be, or be not, thought satisfactory, that there is such a thing, is manifest; and that it is the occasion of

great part of the unreasonable behaviour of men towards each other: that by means of it they palliate their vices and follies to themselves: and that it prevents their applying to themselves those reproofs and instructions, which they meet with either in scripture, or in moral and religious discourses, though exactly suitable to the state of their own mind, and the course of their behaviour. There is one thing further to be added here, that the temper we distinguish by hardness of heart with respect to others, joined with this self-partiality, will carry a man almost any lengths of wickedness, in the way of oppression, hard usage of others, and even to plain injustice; without his having, from what appears, any real sense at all of it. This indeed was not the general character of David; for he plainly gave scope to the affections of compassion and goodwill, as well as to his passions of another kind.

But as some occasions and circumstances lie more open to this self-deceit, and give it greater scope and opportunities than others, these require to be particularly mentioned.

It is to be observed then, that as there are express determinate acts of wickedness, such as murder, adultery, theft: so, on the other hand, there are numberless cases in which the vice and wickedness cannot be exactly defined; but consists in a certain general temper and course of action, or in the neglect of some duty, suppose charity or any other, whose bounds and degrees are not fixed. This is the very province of self-deceit and self-partiality: here it governs without check or controul. "For what commandment is there broken? Is there a transgression where there is no law? a vice which cannot be defined?"

Whoever will consider the whole commerce of human life, will see that a great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the intercourse amongst mankind, cannot be reduced to fixed determinate rules. Yet in these cases there is a right and a wrong; a merciful, a liberal, a kind and compassionate behaviour, which surely is our duty; and an unmerciful contracted spirit, an hard and oppressive

course of behaviour, which is most certainly immoral and vicious. But who can define precisely, wherein that contracted spirit and hard usage of others consist, as murder and theft may be defined? There is not a word in our language, which expresses more detestable wickedness than oppression: yet the nature of this vice cannot be so exactly stated, nor the bounds of it so determinately marked, as that we shall be able to say in all instances, where rigid right and justness end, and the oppression begins. In these cases there is great latitude left for every one to determine for, and consequently to deceive, himself. It is chiefly in these cases, that self-deceit comes in; as every one must see that there is much larger scope for it here, than in express, single, determinate acts of wickedness. Of this, the story of David, now before us, affords the most striking instance. It is really prodigious, to see a man, before so remarkable for virtue and piety, going on deliberately from adultery to murder, with the same cool contrivance, and, from what appears, with as little disturbance, as a man would endeavour to prevent the ill consequences of a mistake he had made in any common matter. That total insensibility of mind with respect to those horrid crimes, after the commission of them, manifestly shews that he did some way or other delude himself: and this could not be with respect to the crimes themselves, they were so manifestly of the grossest kind. What the particular circumstances were with which he extenuated them, and quieted and deceived himself, are not related.

Having thus explained the nature of internal hypocrisy and self-deceit, and remarked the occasions upon which it exerts itself; there are several things further to be observed concerning it: that all of the sources, to which it was traced up, are sometimes observable together in one and the same person: but that one of them is more remarkable, and to a higher degree, in some, and others of them are so in others: that in general it is a complicated thing; and may be in all different degrees and kinds; that the temper itself is essentially in its own nature vicious and immoral. It is

unfairness ; it is dishonesty ; it is falseness of heart : and is therefore so far from extenuating guilt, that it is itself the greatest of all guilt in proportion to the degree it prevails ; for it is a corruption of the whole moral character in its principle. Our understanding and sense of good and evil, is the light and guide of life : *If therefore that light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ?* Matt. vi. 23. For this reason our Saviour puts an evil eye as the direct opposite to a single eye ; the absence of that simplicity, which these last words imply, being itself evil and vicious. And whilst men are under the power of this temper, in proportion still to the degree they are so, they are fortified on every side against conviction : and when they hear the vice and folly of what is in truth their own course of life, exposed in the justest and strongest manner, they will often assent to it, and even carry the matter further ; persuading themselves, one does not know how, but some way or other persuading themselves, that they are out of the case, and that it hath no relation to them. Yet, notwithstanding this, there frequently appears a suspicion, that all is not right, or as it should be ; and perhaps there is always at bottom somewhat of this sort. There are doubtless many instances of the ambitious, the revengeful, the covetous, and those whom with too great indulgence we only call the men of pleasure, who will not allow themselves to think how guilty they are, who explain and argue away their guilt to themselves ; and though they do really impose upon themselves in some measure, yet there are none of them but have, if not a proper knowledge, yet at least an implicit suspicion, where the weakness lies, and what part of their behaviour they have reason to wish unknown or forgotten for ever. Truth, and real good sense, and thorough integrity, carry along with them a peculiar consciousness of their own genuineness : there is a feeling belonging to them, which does not accompany their counterfeits, error, folly, half honesty, partial and slight regards to virtue and right, so far only as they are consistent with that course of

gratification which men happen to be set upon. And, if this be the case, it is much the same as if we should suppose a man to have had a general view of some scene, enough to satisfy him that it was very disagreeable, and then to shut his eyes, that he might not have a particular or distinct view of its several deformities. It is as easy to close the eyes of the mind, as those of the body : and the former is more frequently done with wilfulness, and yet not attended to, than the latter ; the actions of the mind being more quick and transient than those of the senses. This may be further illustrated by another thing observable in ordinary life. It is not uncommon for persons who run out their fortunes, entirely to neglect looking into the state of their affairs, and this from a general knowledge, that the condition of them is bad. These extravagant people are perpetually ruined before they themselves expected it : and they tell you for an excuse, and tell you truly, that they did not think they were so much in debt, or that their expences so far exceeded their income. And yet no one will take this for an excuse, who is sensible that their ignorance of their particular circumstances was owing to their general knowledge of them ; that is, their general knowledge, that matters were not well with them, prevented them looking into particulars. There is somewhat of the like kind with this in respect to morals, virtue, and religion. Men find that the survey of themselves, their own heart and temper, their own life and behaviour, doth not afford them satisfaction : things are not as they should be : therefore they turn away, will not go over particulars, or look deeper, lest they should find more amiss. For who would chuse to be put out of humour with himself ? No one surely, if it were not in order to mend, and to be more thoroughly and better pleased with himself for the future.

If this sincere self-enjoyment and home-satisfaction be thought desirable, and worth some pains and diligence, the following reflections will, I suppose, deserve your attention, as what may be of service and assistance to all who are in

any measure honestly disposed, for avoiding that fatal self-deceit, and towards getting acquainted with themselves.

The first is, That those who have never had any suspicion of, who have never made allowances for this weakness in themselves, who have never, if I may be allowed such a manner of speaking, caught themselves in it, may almost take for granted that they have been very much misled by it. For consider: nothing is more manifest, than that affection and passion of all kinds influence the judgment. Now as we have naturally a greater regard to ourselves than to others, as the private affection is more prevalent than the public, the former will have proportionally a greater influence upon the judgment, upon our way of considering things. People are not backward in owning this partiality of judgment, in cases of friendship and natural relation. The reason is obvious, why it is not so readily acknowledged, when the interest which misleads us is more confined, confined to ourselves: but we all take notice of it in each other in these cases. There is not any observation more common, than that there is no judging of a matter from hearing only one side. This is not founded upon supposition, at least it is not always, of a formed design in the relater to deceive; for it holds in cases, where he expects that the whole will be told over again by the other side. But the supposition, which this observation is founded upon, is the very thing now before us; namely, that men are exceedingly prone to deceive themselves, and judge too favourably in every respect, where themselves and their own interest are concerned. Thus, though we have not the least reason to suspect that such an interested person hath any intention to deceive us, yet we of course make great allowances for his having deceived himself. If this be general, almost universal, it is prodigious that every man can think himself an exception, and that he is free from this self-partiality. The direct contrary is the truth. Every man may take for granted that he has a great deal of it, till, from the strictest observance upon himself, he finds particular reason to think otherwise.

Secondly, There is one easy and almost sure way to avoid being misled by

this self-partiality, and to guard with our real character regard to the suspicious part, and keep a steady eye over ourselves in that respect. Suppose then a man, fully satisfied with himself, and his behaviour, such an one, if you please, as the Pharisee in the gospel; or a better man. Well, but allowing this good opinion you have of yourself to be true, yet every one is liable to be misrepresented. Suppose, then, an enemy was to set about defaming you, what part of your character would he single out? What particular scandal, think you, would he be most likely to fix upon you? And what would the world be most ready to believe? There is scarce a man living but could, from the most transient superficial view of himself, answer this question: What is that ill thing, that faulty behaviour, which I am apprehensive an enemy, who was thoroughly acquainted with me, would be most likely to lay to my charge, and which the world would be most apt to believe? It is indeed possible that a man may not be guilty in that respect. All that I say is, let him in plainness and honesty fix upon that part of his character for a particular survey and reflection, and by this he will come to be acquainted, whether he be guilty or innocent in that respect, and how far he is one or the other.

Thirdly, It would very much prevent our being misled by this self-partiality, to reduce that practical rule of our Saviour, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them*, to our judgment and way of thinking. This rule, you see, consists of two parts. One is, to substitute another for yourself when you take a survey of any part of your behaviour, or consider what is proper and fit, and reasonable for you to do upon any occasion: the other part is, that you substitute yourself in the room of another; consider yourself as the person affected by such a behaviour, or towards whom such an action is done, and then you would not only see, but likewise feel, the reasonableness or unreasonableness of such an action or behaviour. But, alas! the rule itself may be dishonestly applied: there are persons who have not impartiality enough with respect to themselves, nor regard enough for

others, to be able to make a just application. This just application, if men honestly make it, is in effect all that I have been recommending. It is the whole thing, the direct contrary to the inward dishonesty as respecting our intercourse with our fellow-creatures. And even the bearing this rule in their thoughts may be of some service, the attempt thus to apply it is an attempt towards being fair and impartial, and may chance unawares to shew them to themselves, to shew them the truth of the case they are considering.

Upon the whole it is manifest, that there is such a thing as self-partiality and self-deceit that in some persons it is to a degree which would be thought incredible, were not the instances before our eyes, of which the behaviour of David is perhaps the highest one possible, in a single particular case, for there is not the least appearance, that it reached his general character, that we are almost all of us influenced by it in some degree, and in some respects that therefore every one ought to have an eye to and beware of it. And all that I have further to add upon this subject is, that either there is a difference between right and wrong, or there is not: religion is true, or it is not. If it be not, there is no reason for any concern about it: but if it be true, it requires real fullness of mind and honesty of heart. And, if people will be wicked, they had better of the two be so from the common vicious passions without such restraints, than from this deep and calm source of delusion, which undermines the whole principle of good, darkens that light, that *candle of the Lord within*, which is to direct our steps, and corrupts conscience, which is the guide of life.

S E R M O N LXXIX.

On the Character of Balaam.

NUMB. XXIII. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

THESE words, taken alone, and without respect to him who spoke them, lead our

thoughts immediately to the different ends of good and bad men. For, though the comparison is not expressed, yet it is manifestly implied; as is also the preference of one of these characters to the other in that last circumstance, death. And, since dying the death of the righteous or of the wicked necessarily implies men's being righteous or wicked, *i. e.* having lived righteously or wickedly, a comparison of them in their lives also might come into consideration from such a single view of the words themselves. But my present design is, to consider them with a particular reference or respect to him who spoke them; which reference, if you please to attend, you will see. And if what shall be offered to your consideration at this time be thought a discourse upon the whole history of this man, rather than upon the particular words I have read, this is of no consequence: it is sufficient, if it afford reflection of use and service to ourselves.

But, in order to avoid cavils respecting this remarkable relation in Scripture, let me just observe that as this is not a place for answering them, so they no way affect the following discourse, since the character there given is plainly a real one in life, and such as there are parallels to.

The occasion of Balaam's coming out of his own country into the land of Moab, where he pronounced this solemn prayer or wish, he himself relates in the first parable or prophetic speech, of which it is the conclusion. In which it is a custom recorded to, proper to be taken notice of: that of devoting enemies to destruction, before the entrance upon a war with them. This custom appears to have prevailed over a great part of the world; for we find it amongst the most distant nations. The Romans had public officers, to whom it belonged as a stated part of their office. But there was somewhat more particular in the case now before us, Balaam being looked upon as an extraordinary person, whose blessing or curse was thought to be always effectual.

In order to engage the reader's attention to this passage, the sacred historian has enumerated the preparatory circumstances, which are these. Balaam requires the king of Moab to build him

seven altars, and to prepare him the same number of oxen and of rams. The sacrifice being over, he retires alone to a solitude sacred to these occasions, there to wait the divine inspiration or answer, for which the foregoing rites were the preparation: ver. 4, 5. *And God met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, upon receiving of which, he returns back to the altars; where was the king, who had all this while attended the sacrifice, as appointed; he and all the princes of Moab standing, big with expectation of the Prophet's reply: ver. 6. And he took up his parable and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

It is necessary, as you will see in the progress of this discourse, particularly to observe what he understood by righteous. And he himself is introduced in the book of Micah explaining it: if by righteous is meant good, as to be sure it is. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal.* From the mention of Shittim it is manifest that it is this very story which is here referred to, though another part of it, the account of which is not now extant; as there are many quotations in Scripture out of books which are not come down to us. *Remember what Balaam answered, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord, i. e. the righteousness which God will accept. Balak demands, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit*

of my body for the sin of my soul? Balaam answers him, He hath said thee, O man, what is good: and will the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Here is a good man expressly characterised, as distinct from a dishonest and superstitious man. No words can more strongly exclude dishonesty and falseness of heart, than doing justice, and loving mercy: and both these, as well as walking humbly with God, are put in opposition to those ceremonial methods of recommendation, which Balak hoped might have served the turn. From hence appears what he meant by the righteous, whose death he desires to die.

Whether it was his own character shall now be inquired: and in order to determine it, we must take a view of his whole behaviour upon this occasion. When the elders of Moab came to him, though he appears to have been much assured with the rewards offered, yet he had such regard to the authority of God, as to keep the messengers in suspense until he had consulted his will. *And God said to him, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.* Upon this he dismisses the ambassadors, with an absolute refusal of accompanying them back to their king. Thus far his regard to his duty prevailed, neither does there any thing appear as yet amiss in his conduct. His answer being reported to the king of Moab, a more honourable embassy is immediately dispatched, and greater rewards proposed. Then the iniquity of his heart began to disclose itself. A thorough honest man would without hesitation have repeated his former answer, that he could not be guilty of so infamous a prostitution of the sacred character with which he was invested, as in the name of a prophet to curse those whom he knew to be blessed. But instead of this, which was the only honest part in these circumstances that lay before him, he desires the princes of Moab to tarry that night with him also; and for the sake of the reward deliberates whether, by some means or other, he might not be able to obtain leave to curse Israel; to do that, which had been before revealed to him to be contrary

to the will of God, which yet he resolves not to do without that permission. Upon which, as when this nation afterwards rejected God from reigning over them, he gave them a king in his anger; in the same way, as appears from other parts of the narration, he gives Balaam the permission he desired; for this is the most natural sense of the words. Arriving in the territories of Moab, and being received with particular distinction by the king, and he repeating in person the promise of the rewards he had before made to him by his ambassadors; he seeks, the text says by sacrifices and enchantments, (what these were is not to our purpose,) to obtain leave of God to curse the people; keeping still his resolution not to do it without that permission; which not being able to obtain, he had such regard to the command of God, as to keep this resolution to the last. The supposition of his being under a supernatural restraint is a mere fiction of Philo: he is plainly represented to be under no other force or restraint than the fear of God. However, he goes on persevering in that endeavour, after he had declared, that *God had not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither had he seen perverseness in Israel*; i. e. they were a people of virtue and piety, so far as not to have drawn down, by their iniquity, that curse which he was soliciting leave to pronounce upon them. So that the state of Balaam's mind was this: he wanted to do what he knew to be very wicked, and contrary to the express command of God; he had inward checks and restraints, which he could not entirely get over; he therefore casts about for ways to reconcile this wickedness with his duty. How great a paradox soever this may appear, as it is indeed a contradiction in terms, it is the very account which the Scripture gives us of him.

But there is a more surprising piece of iniquity yet behind. Not daring in his religious character, as a prophet, to assist the king of Moab, he considers whether there might not be found some other means of assisting him against that very people, whom he himself, by the fear of God, was restrained from cursing in words. One would not think it possible, that the weakness, even of religious

self-deceit in its utmost excess, could have so poor a distinction, so fond an evasion to serve itself of. But so it was: and he could think of no other method, than to betray the children of Israel to provoke his wrath who was their only strength and defence. The temptation which he pitched upon, was that concerning which Solomon afterwards observed, that it had *cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men had been slain by it*: and of which he himself was a sad example, when *his wives turned away his heart after other Gods*. This succeeded: the people sin against God; and thus the Prophet's counsel brought on that destruction, which he could by no means be prevailed upon to assist with the religious ceremony of execration, which the king of Moab thought would itself have effected it. Their crime and punishment are related in Deuteronomy and Numbers. And from the relation repeated in Numbers, it appears that Balaam was the contriver of the whole matter. It is also ascribed to him in the Revelations, where he is said to have *taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel*.

This was the man, this Balaam, I say, was the man who desired to *die the death of the righteous*, and that his *last end might be like his*; and this was the state of his mind, when he pronounced these words.

So that the object we have now before us is the most astonishing in the world: a very wicked man, under a deep sense of God and religion, persisting still in his wickedness, and preferring the wages of unrighteousness, even when he had before him a lively view of death, and that approaching period of his days, which should deprive him of all those advantages for which he was prostituting himself; and likewise a prospect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future state of retribution; all this joined with an explicit ardent wish, that, when he was to leave this world, he might be in the condition of a righteous man. Good God, what inconsistency, what perplexity is here! With what different views of things, with what contradictory principles of action, must such a mind be torn and distracted! It was not unthinking care-

lessness, by which he run on headlong in vice and folly, without ever making a stand to ask himself what he was doing: no; he acted upon the cool motives of interest and advantage. Neither was he totally hard and callous to impressions of religion, what we call abandoned; for he absolutely denied to curse Israel. When reason assumes her place, when convinced of his duty, when he owns and feels, and is actually under the influence of the divine authority; whilst he is carrying on his views to the grave, the end of all temporal greatness; under this sense of things, with the better character and more desirable state present full before him, in his thoughts, in his wishes, voluntarily to choose the worse, what fatality is here! Or how otherwise can such a character be explained? And yet, strange as it may appear, it is not altogether an uncommon one: nay, with some small alterations, and put a little lower, it is applicable to a very considerable part of the world. For, if the reasonable choice be seen and acknowledged, and yet men make the unreasonable one, is not this the same contradiction; that very inconsistency, which appeared so unaccountable?

To give some little opening to such characters and behaviour, it is to be observed in general, that there is no account to be given in the way of reason of men's so strong attachments to the present world; our hopes and fears and pursuits are in degrees beyond all proportion to the known value of the things they respect. This may be said without taking into consideration religion and a future state; and when these are considered, the disproportion is infinitely heightened. Now when men go against their reason, and contradict a more important interest at a distance, for one nearer, though of less consideration, if this be the whole of the case, all that can be said is, that strong passions, some kind of brute force within, prevails over the principle of rationality. However, if this be with a clear, full and distinct view of the truth of things, then it is doing the utmost violence to themselves, acting in the most palpable contradiction to their very nature. But if there be any such thing in mankind, as putting

half-deceits upon themselves; which there plainly is, either by avoiding reflection, or, if they do reflect, by religious equivocation, subterfuges, and palliating matters to themselves; by these means conscience may be laid asleep, and they may go on in a course of wickedness with less disturbance. All the various turns, doubles, and intricacies in a dishonest heart, cannot be unfolded or laid open; but that there is somewhat of that kind is manifest, be it to be called self-deceit, or by any other name. Balaam had before his eyes the authority of God, absolutely forbidding him what he, for the sake of a reward, had the strongest inclination to: he was likewise in a state of mind sober enough to consider death and his last end: by these considerations he was restrained, first from going to the king of Moab, and after he did go, from cursing Israel. But notwithstanding this, there was great wickedness in his heart. He could not forego the rewards of unrighteousness; he therefore first seeks for indulgences; and when these could not be obtained, he sins against the whole meaning, end, and design of the prohibition, which no consideration in the world could prevail with him to go against the letter of. And surely that impious counsel he gave to Balak, against the children of Israel, was considered in itself a greater piece of wickedness, than if he had cursed them in words.

If it be inquired what his situation, his hopes and fears were, in respect to this his wish? the answer must be, that consciousness of the wickedness of his heart must necessarily have destroyed all settled hopes of dying the death of the righteous; he could have no calm satisfaction in this view of his last end; yet, on the other hand, it is possible that those partial regards to his duty now mentioned, might keep him from perfect despair.

Upon the whole, it is manifest that Balaam had the most just and true notions of God and religion; as appears, partly from the original story itself, and more plainly from the passage in Micah, where he explains religion to consist in real virtue and real piety, expressly distinguished from superstition, and in

terms which most strongly exclude dishonesty, falseness of heart. Yet you see a behaviour: he seeks indulgences, a plain wickedness; which not being able to obtain, he glosses over that same wickedness, dresses it up in a new form, in order to make it pass off more easily with himself. That is, he deliberately contrives to deceive and impose upon himself, in a matter which he knew to be of the utmost importance.

To bring these observations home to ourselves: It is too evident that many persons allow themselves in very unjustifiable courses, who yet make great pretences to religion; not to deceive the world, none can be so weak as to think this will pass in our age; but from principles, hopes, and fears, respecting God and a future state; and go on thus with a sort of tranquillity and quiet of mind. This cannot be upon a thorough consideration, and full resolution, the pleasures and advantages they propose are to be pursued at all hazards, against reason, against the law of God, and though everlasting destruction is to be the consequence. This would be doing too great violence upon themselves. No, they are for making a composition with the Almighty. These of his commands they will obey; but as to others, why they will make all the atonements in their power; the ambitious, the covetous, the dissolute man, each in a way which shall not contradict his respective pursuit. Indulgences before, which was Balaam's first attempt, though he was not so successful in it as to deceive himself, or atonements afterwards, are all the same. And here perhaps come in faint hopes that they may, and half-resolves that they will, one time or other, make a change.

Besides these, there are also persons, who, from a more just way of considering things, see the infinite absurdity of this, of substituting sacrifice instead of obedience; there are persons far enough from superstition, and not without some real sense of God and religion upon their minds; who yet are guilty of most unjustifiable practices, and go on with great coolness and command over themselves. The same dishonesty and unsoundness of heart discovers itself in

these another way. In all common ordinary cases we see intuitively at first view what is our duty, what is the honest part. This is the ground of the observation, that the first thought is often the best. In these cases, doubt and deliberation is itself dishonesty; as it was in Balaam upon the second message. That which is called considering what is our duty in a particular case, is very often nothing but endeavouring to explain it away. Thus those courses, which, if men would fairly attend to the dictates of their own consciences, they would see to be corruption, excess, oppression, uncharitableness; these are refined upon; things were so and so circumstantiated; great difficulties are raised about fixing bounds and degrees; and thus every moral obligation whatever may be evaded. Here is scope, I say, for an unfair mind to explain away every moral obligation to itself. Whether men reflect again upon this internal management and artifice, and how explicit they are with themselves, is another question. There are many operations of the mind, many things pass within, which we never reflect upon again; which a by-stander, from having frequent opportunities of observing us and our conduct, may make shrewd guesses at.

That great numbers are in this way of deceiving themselves is certain. There is scarce a man in the world, who has entirely got over all regards, hopes, and fears, concerning God and a future state; and these apprehensions in the generality, bad as we are, prevail in considerable degrees; yet men will and can be wicked with calmness and thought; we see they are. There must therefore be some method of making it sit a little easy upon their minds; which, in the superstitious, are those indulgences and atonements before mentioned, and this self-deceit of another kind in persons of another character. And both these proceed from a certain unfairness of mind, a peculiar inward dishonesty; the direct contrary to that simplicity which our Saviour recommends, under the name of becoming little children, as a necessary qualification for our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

But to conclude: How much soever men differ in the course of life they prefer, and in their ways of palliating and excusing their vices to themselves; yet all agree in the one thing, *desiring to die the death of the righteous*. This is surely remarkable. The observation may be extended further, and put thus: even without determining what that is which we call guilt or innocence, there is no man but would choose, after having had the pleasure or advantage of a vicious action, to be free of the guilt of it, to be in the state of an innocent man. This shews at least the disturbance and implicit dissatisfaction in vice. If we inquire into the grounds of it, we shall find it proceeds partly from an immediate sense of having done evil; and partly from an apprehension, that this inward sense shall one time or another be seconded by an higher judgment, upon which our whole being depends. Now to suspend and drown this sense, and these apprehensions, be it by the hurry of business or of pleasure; or by superstition, or moral equivocations, this is in a manner one and the same, and makes no alteration at all in the nature of our case. Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: why then should we desire to be deceived? As we are reasonable creatures, and have any regard to ourselves, we ought to lay these things plainly and honestly before our mind, and upon this act as you please, as you think most fit; make that choice, and prefer that course of life, which you can justify to yourselves, and which sits most easy upon your own mind. It will immediately appear, that vice cannot be the happiness, but must upon the whole be the misery, of such a creature as man; a moral, an accountable agent. Superstitious observances, self-deceit though of a more refined sort, will not in reality at all mend matters with us. And the result of the whole can be nothing else, but that, with simplicity and fairness, we keep innocency, and take heed *unto the thing that is right; for this to us shall bring a man peace at the any such.*

SERMON LXXX.

By Bishop BOTLER.

Upon the Love of God.

MATTH. xxii. 37.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

EVERY body knows, you therefore need only just be put in mind, that there is such a thing, as having so great horror of one extreme, as to run insensibly and of course into the contrary; and that a doctrine's having been a shelter for enthusiasm, or made to serve the purposes of superstition, is no proof of the falsity of it; truth or right being somewhat real in itself, and so not to be judged of by its liableness to abuse, or by its supposed distance from or nearness to error. It may be sufficient to have mentioned this in general, without taking notice of the particular extravagancies, which have been vented under the pretence or endeavour of explaining the love of God; or how manifestly we are got into the contrary extreme, under the notion of a reasonable religion; so very reasonable, as to have nothing to do with the heart and affections, if these words signify any thing but the faculty by which we discern speculative truth.

By the love of God, I would understand all those regard, all those affections of mind which are due immediately to him from such a creature as man, and which rest in him as their end. As this does not include servile fear, so neither will any other regards, how reasonable soever, which respect any thing out of or besides the perfection of the Divine Nature, come into consideration here. But all fear is not excluded, because his displeasure is itself the natural proper object of fear. Reverence, ambition of his love and approbation, delight in the hope or consciousness of it, come likewise into this definition of the love of God; because he is the natural object of all those affections or moves.

ments of God, as really as he is the object of affection, which is in the strictest sense called love; and all of them really rest in him, as their end. And they may all be understood to be added in these words of our Saviour, without putting any force upon them: for he is speaking of the love of God and our neighbour, as containing the whole of piety and virtue.

It is plain that the nature of man is so constituted, as to feel certain affections upon the sight or contemplation of certain objects. Now the very notion of affection implies resting in its object as an end. And the particular affection to good characters, reverence and moral love of them, is natural to all those who have any degree of real goodness in themselves. This will be illustrated by the description of a perfect character in a creature; and by considering the manner in which a good man in his presence would be affected towards such a character. He would of course feel the affections of love, reverence, desire of his approbation, delight in the hope or consciousness of it. And surely all this is applicable, and may be brought up to that Being, who is infinitely more than an adequate object of all those affections; whom we are commanded to *love with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind*. And of these regards towards Almighty God, some are more particularly suitable to and becoming so imperfect a creature as man, in this mortal state we are passing through; and some of them, and perhaps other excesses of the mind, will be the employment and happiness of good men in a state of perfection.

This is a general view of what the following discourse will contain. And it is manifest the subject is a real one: there is nothing in it enthusiastical or unreasonableness. And if it be indeed at all a subject, it is one of the utmost importance.

As mankind have a faculty by which they discern speculative truth; so we have various affections towards external objects. Understanding and temper, reason and affection, are as distinct ideas as reason and hunger; and one would think could no more be confounded. It is by

reason that we get the ideas of the objects of our affections; but in these cases, reason and affection are not the same, than sight of a particular object, and the pleasure or uneasiness consequent thereupon, are the same. Just as reason tends to and rests in the discernment of truth, the object of the very nature of affection consists in tending towards, and resting in, its objects as an end. We do indeed often in common language say, that things are loved, desired, esteemed, not for themselves, but for somewhat further, something out of and beyond them: yet, in these cases, whoever will attend, will see, that these things are not in reality the objects of the affections, *i. e.* are not loved, desired, esteemed, but the somewhat further and beyond them. If we have no affections which rest in what are called their objects, then what is called affection, love, desire, hope, in human nature, is only an uneasiness in being at rest; an unquiet disposition to action, progress, pursuit, without end or meaning. But if there be any such thing as delight in the company of one person, rather than of another; whether in the way of friendship, or mirth and entertainment, it is all one, if it be without respect to fortune, honour, or increasing our stores of knowledge, or any thing beyond the present time; here is an instance of an affection absolutely resting in its object as its end, and being gratified, in the same way as the appetite of hunger is satisfied with food. Yet nothing is more common than to hear it asked, What advantage a man hath in such a course, suppose of study, particular friendships, or in any other? Nothing, I say, is more common, than to hear such a question put in a way which supposes no gain, advantage, or interest, but as a means to somewhat further: and if so, then there is no such thing at all as real interest, gain, or advantage. This is the same absurdity with respect to life, as an infinite series of effects without a cause is in speculation. The gain, advantage, or interest, consists in the delight itself, arising from such a faculty's having its object: neither is there any such thing as happiness or enjoyment, but what arises from hence. The

ness of hope and of reflection are men's notions: the former being only for business anticipated; the latter, the exultation enjoyed over again after success. And even the general expectation of future happiness can afford satisfaction only as it is a present object and principle of self-love.

It was doubtless intended, that life should be very much in pursuit to the happiness of mankind. But this is carried so much further than is reasonable, that what gives immediate satisfaction, *i. e.* our present interest, is scarce considered as our interest at all. It is inventions which have only a remote tendency towards enjoyment, perhaps but a remote tendency towards gaining the means only of enjoyment, which are chiefly spoken of as useful to the world. And though this way of thinking were just with respect to the imperfect state we are now in, where we know so little of satisfaction without satiety; yet it must be guarded against, when we are considering the happiness of a state of perfection: which happiness being enjoyment and not hope, must necessarily consist in this, that our affections have their objects, and rest in those objects as an end, *i. e.* be satisfied with them. This will further appear in the sequel of this discourse.

Of the several affections, or inward sensations, which particular objects excite in man, there are some, the having of which implies the love of them, when they are reflected upon. This cannot be said of all our affections, principles, and motives of action. It were ridiculous to assert, that a man upon reflection hath the same kind of approbation of the appetite of hunger, or the passion of fear, as he hath of good-will to his fellow-creatures. To be a just, a good, a righteous man, plainly carries with it a peculiar affection to, or love of justice, goodness, righteousness, when these principles are the objects of contemplation. Now if a man approves of, or hath an affection to, any principle in and for itself, incidental things allowed for, it will be the same whether he views it in his own mind or in another, in himself, or in his neighbour. This is the account of our approbation of our moral love and affection to good characters; which can-

not but be in those who have any degrees of real goodness in themselves, and who discern and take notice of the same principle in others.

From observation of what passes within ourselves, our own actions, and behaviour of others, the mind may carry on its reflections as far as it pleases; much beyond what we experience in ourselves, or discern in our fellow-creatures. It may go on, and consider goodness as become an uniform continued principle of action, as conducted by reason, and forming a temper and character absolutely good and perfect, which is in a higher sense excellent, and proportionably the object of love and approbation.

Let us then suppose a creature perfect according to his created nature; let his form be humane, and his capacities no more than equal to those of the chief of men: goodness shall be his proper character, with wisdom to direct it, and power within some certain determined sphere of action to exert it: but goodness must be the simple actuating principle with him; this being the moral quality which is amiable, or the immediate object of love as distinct from other affections of approbation. Here then is a finite object for our mind to tend towards, to exercise itself upon: a creature, perfect according to his capacity, fixed, steady, equally unmoved by weak pity, or more weak fury and resentment; forming the justest scheme of conduct; going on undisturbed in the execution of it, through the several methods of severity and reward, towards his end, namely, the general happiness of all with whom he hath to do, as in itself right and valuable. This character, though uniform in itself, in its principle, yet exerting itself in different ways, or considered in different views, may by its appearing variety move different affections. Thus, the severity of justice would not affect us in the same way, as an act of mercy: the adventitious qualities of wisdom and power may be considered in themselves: and even the strength of mind, which this immovable goodness supposes, may likewise be viewed as an object of contemplation, distinct from the goodness itself. Super-

rior excellence of any kind, as well as superior wisdom and power, is the object of awe and reverence to all creatures, whatever their moral character be: but so far as creatures of the lowest rank were good, so far the view of this character, as simply good, must appear amiable to them, be the object of, or beget love. Further, we suppose we were conscious, that this superior person approved of us, that we had nothing servilely to fear from him; that he was really our friend, and kind and good to us in particular, as he had occasionally intercourse with us: we must be other creatures than we are, or we could not but feel the same kind of satisfaction and enjoyment (whatever would be the degree of it) from this higher acquaintance and friendship, as we feel from common ones; the intercourse being real, and the persons equally present, in both cases. We should have a more ardent desire to be approved by his better judgment, and a satisfaction in that approbation of the same sort with what would be felt in respect to common persons, or be wrought in us by their presence.

Let us now raise the character, and suppose this creature, for we are still going on with the supposition of a creature, our proper guardian and governor; that we were in a progress of being towards somewhat further; and that his scheme of government was too vast for our capacities to comprehend; remembering still that he is perfectly good, and our friend as well as our governor. Wisdom, power, goodness, accidentally viewed any where, would inspire reverence, awe, love: and as these affections would be raised in higher or lower degrees, in proportion as we had occasionally more or less intercourse with the creature endued with those qualities; so this further consideration and knowledge, that he was our proper guardian and governor, would much more bring these objects and qualities home to ourselves; teach us that they had a greater respect to us in particular; that we had an higher interest in that wisdom, and power, and goodness. We should, with joy, gratitude, reverence, love, trust, and dependence, appropriate the character, as what he had a right in; and make our boast in

such our relation to it. And the conclusion of the whole would be, that we should refer ourselves implicitly to him, and cast ourselves entirely upon him. As the whole attention of life should be to obey his commands; so the highest enjoyment of it must arise from the contemplation of this character, and our relation to it, from a consciousness of his favour and approbation, and from the exercise of those affections towards him which could not but be raised from his presence. A being who hath these attributes, who stands in this relation, and is thus sensibly present to the mind, must necessarily be the object of these affections: there is as real a correspondence between them, as between the lowest appetite of sense and its object.

That this Being is not a creature, but the Almighty God; that he is of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, does not render him less the object of reverence and love, than he would be if he had those attributes only in a limited degree. The Being who made us, and upon whom we entirely depend, is the object of some regards. He hath given us certain affections of mind, which correspond to wisdom, power, goodness; *i. e.* which are raised upon view of those qualities. If then he be really wise, powerful, good; he is the natural object of those affections, which he hath endued us with, and which correspond to those attributes. That he is infinite in power, perfect in wisdom and goodness, makes no alteration, but only that he is the object of those affections, which he hath endued us with, and which correspond to those attributes. That he is infinite in power, perfect in wisdom and goodness, makes no alteration, but only that he is the object of those affections raised to the highest pitch. He is not indeed to be discerned by any of our senses. *I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! (Job, xxii.)* But is he then afar off? does he not fill heaven and earth with his presence? The presence of our fellow-

creatures affects our senses, and our senses give us the knowledge of their presence; which hath different kinds of influence upon us; love, joy, sorrow, restraint, encouragement, reverence. However, this influence is not immediately from our senses, but from that knowledge. Thus suppose a person neither to see nor hear another, nor to know by any of his senses, but yet certainly to know, that another was with him; this knowledge might, and in many cases would, have one or more of the effects before-mentioned. It is therefore not only reasonable, but also natural, to be affected with a presence, though it be not the object of our senses: whether it be, or be not, is merely an accidental circumstance, which needs not come into consideration: it is the certainty that he is with us, and we with him, which hath the influence. We consider persons then as present, not only when they are within the reach of our senses, but also when we are assured by any other means that they are within such a nearness; nay, if they are not, we can recall them to our mind, and be moved towards them at present: and must he, who is so much more intimately with us, that in him we live and move and have our being, be thought too distant to be the object of our affections? We own and feel the force of amiable and worthy qualities in our fellow-creatures: and can we be insensible to the contemplation of perfect goodness? Do we reverence the shadows of greatness here below, are we solicitous about honour and esteem, and the opinion of the world; And shall we not feel the same with respect to him, whose are wisdom and power in their original, who is the God of judgment, by whom actions are weighed? Thus love, reverence, desire of esteem, every faculty, every affection, tends towards, and is employed about its respective object in common cases: and must the exercise of them be suspended with regard to him alone, who is an object, an infinitely more than adequate object, to our most exalted faculties; him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things?

As we cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business on it, so neither can we alter our real nature.

Therefore no exercise of the mind can be recommended, but only the exercise of those faculties you are conscious of. Religion does not demand new affections; but only claims the direction of those you already have, those affections you daily feel: though unhappily confined to objects, not altogether unsuitable, but altogether unequal to them. We only represent to you the higher, the adequate objects of those very faculties and affections. Let the man of ambition go on still to consider disgrace as the greatest evil; honour, as his chief good. But disgrace, in whose estimation? honour, in whose judgment? This is the only question. If shame, and delight in esteem be spoken of as real, as any settled ground of pain or pleasure; both these must be in proportion to the supposed wisdom and worth of him, by whom we are condemned or esteemed. Must it then be thought enthusiastical to speak of a sensibility of this sort, which shall have respect to an unerring judgment, to infinite wisdom; when we are assured this unerring judgment, this infinite wisdom does observe upon our actions?

It is the same with respect to the love of God in the strictest and most confined sense. We only offer and represent the highest object of an affection, supposed already in your mind. Some degree of goodness must be previously supposed: this always implies the love of itself, an affection to goodness: the highest, the adequate object of this affection, is perfect goodness; which therefore we are to love with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. "Must we then, forgetting our own interest, as "it were go out of ourselves, and love "God for his own sake?" No more forget your own interest, no more go out of yourselves than when you prefer one place, one prospect, the conversation of one man to that of another. Does not every affection necessarily imply, that the object of it be itself loved? If it be not, it is not the object of the affection. You may and ought if you can, but it is a great mistake to think you can love, or fear, or hate any thing, from consideration that such love or fear or hatred may be a means of obtaining good or avoiding evil. But the question

SERMON LXXXI.

By Bishop BUTLER.

whether we ought to love God for his sake or for our own, being a mere mistake in language; the real question, which this is mistaken for, will, I suppose, be answered by observing, that the goodness of God already exercised towards us, our present dependance upon him, and our expectation of future benefits, ought, and have a natural tendency, to beget in us the affection of gratitude, and greater love towards him, than the same goodness exercised towards others were it only for this reason, that every affection is moved in proportion to the sense we have of the object of it, and we cannot but have a more lively sense of goodness, when exercised towards ourselves than when exercised to others. I added expectation of future benefits, because the ground of that expectation is present goodness.

Thus Almighty God is the natural object of the several affections, love, reverence, fear, desire of approbation. For though he is simply one yet we cannot but consider him in several and different views. He is in himself one uniform Being, and for ever the same without *variableness or shadow of turning*; but his infinite greatness, his goodness, his wisdom are different objects to our mind. To which is to be added, that from the changes in our own characters together with his unchangeableness we cannot but consider ourselves as more or less the objects of his approbation, and really be so. For if he approves what is good, he cannot merely find the unchangeableness of his nature to prove what is evil. Hence must arise more various movements of mind, more different kinds of affections. And this greater variety also is just and reasonable in such creatures as we are though it respects a Being simply one, good and perfect. As some of these affections are most particularly suitable to so imperfect a creature as man, in this mortal state we are passing through, so there may be other exercises of mind, or some of these in higher degrees, our employment and happiness in a state of perfection.

CONSIDER then our ignorance, the imperfection of our nature, our virtue and our condition in this world, with respect to an infinitely good and just Being, our Creator and Governor, and you will see what religious affections of mind are most particularly suitable to this mortal state we are passing through.

Though we are not affected with any thing so strongly, as what we discern with our senses, and though our nature and condition require, that we be much taken up about sensible things, yet our reason convinces us that God is present with us, and we see and feel the effects of his goodness: he is therefore the object of some regards. The imperfection of our virtue joined with the consideration of his absolute rectitude or holiness, will surely permit that perfection of love, which entirely casts out all fear, yet goodness is the object of love to all creatures who have any degree of it themselves, and consciousness of a real end is in us to approve ourselves to him, joined with the consideration of his goodness is quite excludes servile dread and horror, so it is plainly a reasonable ground for hope of his favour. Neither fear, nor hope nor love then are excluded, and one or either of these will prevail according to the different views we have of God, and ought to prevail, according to the changes we find in our own character. There is a temper of mind made up of, or which follows from all three, fear, hope, love, namely, resignation to the divine will, which is the general temper belonging to this state which ought to be the habitual frame of our mind and heart, and to be exercised at proper seasons more distinctly, in acts of devotion.

Resignation to the will of God, the whole of piety, it includes in it all that is good, and is a source of the most settled quiet and composure of mind. There is the general principle of submission in our nature. Man is not so constituted as to desire things, and be uneasy in the want of them, in proportion

to their known value: many other considerations come in to determine the degrees of desire; particularly, whether the advantage we take a view of, be within the sphere of our rank. Who ever felt uneasiness, upon observing any of the advantages brute creatures have over us? And yet it is plain they have several. It is the same with respect to advantages belonging to creatures of a superior order. Thus, though we see a thing to be highly valuable, yet that it does not belong to our condition of being, is sufficient to suspend our desires after it, to make us rest satisfied without such advantage. Now there is just the same reason for quiet resignation in the want of every thing equally unattainable, and out of our reach in particular, though others of our species be possessed of it. All this may be applied to the whole of life; to positive inconveniences as well as wants; not indeed to the sensations of pain and sorrow, but to all the uneasinesses of reflection, murmuring, and discontent. Thus is human nature formed to compliance, yielding, submission of temper. We find the principles of it within us; and every one exercises it towards some objects or other; *i. e.* feels it with regard to some persons, and some circumstances. Now this is an excellent foundation of a reasonable and religious resignation. Nature teaches and inclines us to take up with our lot: the consideration, that the course of things is unalterable, hath a tendency to quiet the mind under it, to beget a submission of temper to it. But when we can add, that this unalterable course is appointed and continued by infinite wisdom and goodness; how absolute should be our submission, how intire our trust and dependance?

This would reconcile us to our condition; prevent all the supernumerary troubles arising from imagination, distant fears, impatience; all uneasiness, except that which necessarily arises from the calamities themselves we may be under. How many of our cares should we by this means be disburthened of? Cares not properly our own, how apt soever they may be to intrude upon us, and we to admit them; the anxieties of expectation, solicitude about success and disappointment, which in truth are none of

our concern. How open to every gratification would that mind be, which was clear of these incumbrances?

Our resignation to the will of God may be said to be perfect, when our will is lost and resolved up into his; when we rest in his will as our end, as being in itself most just, and right, and good. And where is the impossibility of such an affection to what is just, and right, and good, such a loyalty of heart to the Governor of the universe, as shall prevail over all sinister indirect desires of our own? Neither is this at bottom any thing more than faith, and honesty, and fairness of mind; in a more enlarged sense, indeed, than those words are commonly used. And as, in common cases, fear and hope, and other passions, are raised in us by their respective objects: so this submission of heart, and soul, and mind, this religious resignation, would be as naturally produced by our having just conceptions of Almighty God, and a real sense of his presence with us. In how low a degree soever this temper usually prevails amongst men, yet it is a temper right in itself: it is what we owe to our Creator: it is particularly suitable to our mortal condition, and what we should endeavour after for our own sakes in our passage through such a world as this; where is nothing upon which we can rest or depend; nothing but what we are liable to be deceived and disappointed in. Thus we might *acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace*. This is piety and religion in the strictest sense, considered as an habit of mind; an habitual sense of God's presence with us; being affected towards him, as present, in the manner his superior nature requires from such a creature as man; this is to *walk with God*.

Little more need be said of devotion or religious worship, than that it is the temper exerted into act. The nature of it consists in the actual exercise of those affections towards God, which are supposed habitual in good men. He is always equally present with us; but we are so much taken up with sensible things, that *Lo, he goeth by us, and we see him not: he passeth on also, but we perceive him not.* (Job, ix. 11.) Devotion is retirement, from the world he

has made, to him alone: it is to withdraw from the avocations of sense, to employ our attention wholly upon him, as upon an object actually present, to yield ourselves up to the influence of the Divine presence, and to give full scope to the affections of gratitude, love, reverence, trust, and dependance; of which infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, is the natural and only adequate object. We may apply to the whole of devotion those words of the son of Sirach, *When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will he far exceed: and when you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough.* (Ecclus. xliii. 30.) Our most raised affections of every kind cannot but fall short and be disproportionate, when an infinite Being is the object of them.

This is the highest exercise and employment of mind, that a creature is capable of. As this divine service and worship is itself absolutely due to God, so also is it necessary in order to a further end, to keep alive upon our minds a sense of his authority, a sense that in our ordinary behaviour amongst men we act under him as our governor and judge.

Thus you see the temper of mind respecting God, which is particularly suitable to a state of imperfection; to creatures in a progress of being towards somewhat further.

Suppose now this something further attained; that we were arrived at it: what a perception will it be, to see, and know, and feel, that our trust was not vain, our dependance not groundless? That the issue, event, and consummation, came out such as fully to justify and answer that resignation? If the obscure view of the divine perfection, which we have in this world, ought in just consequence to beget an entire resignation; what will this resignation be exalted into, when we *shall see face to face, and know as we are known*? If we cannot form any distinct notion of that perfection of the love of God, which *casts out all fear*; of that enjoyment of him, which will be the happiness of good men hereafter; the consideration of our wants and capacities of happiness; and that he will be an adequate supply to them, must serve us

instead of such distinct conception of the particular happiness itself.

Let us then suppose a man entirely disengaged from business and pleasure, sitting down alone and at leisure, to reflect upon himself and his own condition of being. He would immediately feel that he was by no means complete of himself, but totally insufficient for his own happiness. One may venture to affirm, that every man hath felt this, whether he hath again reflected upon it or not. It is feeling this deficiency, that they are unsatisfied with themselves, which makes men look out for assistance from abroad; and which has given rise to various kinds of amusements, altogether needless any otherwise than as they serve to fill up the blank spaces of time, and so hinder their feeling this deficiency, and being uneasy with themselves. Now, if these external things we take up with, were really an adequate supply to this deficiency of human nature, if by their means our capacities and desires were all satisfied and filled up; then it might be truly said, that we had found out the proper happiness of man; and so might sit down satisfied, and be at rest in the enjoyment of it. But if it appears, that the amusements, which men usually pass their time in, are so far from coming up to, or answering our notions and desires of, happiness, or good, that they are really no more than what they are commonly called, somewhat to pass away the time; i.e. somewhat which serves to turn us aside from, and prevent our attending to, this our internal poverty and want; if they serve only, or chiefly, to suspend, instead of satisfying, our conceptions and desires of happiness; if the want remains, and we have found out little more than barely the means of making it less sensible; then are we still to seek for somewhat to be an adequate supply to it. It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man, which neither riches, nor honours, nor sensual gratifications, nor any thing in this world, can perfectly fill up or satisfy: there is a deeper and more essential want, than any of these things can be the supply of. Yet surely there is a possibility of somewhat, which may fill up all our capacities of happiness; some-

what, in which our souls may find rest; somewhat, which may be to us that satisfactory good we are inquiring after. But it cannot be any thing which is valuable, only as it tends to some further end. Those therefore who have got this world so much into their hearts, as not to be able to consider happiness as consisting in any thing but property and possessions, which are only valuable as the means to somewhat else, cannot have the least glimpse of the subject before us; which is the end, not the means; the thing itself, not somewhat in order to it. But if you can lay aside that general, confused, undeterminate notion of happiness, as consisting in such possessions, and fix in your thoughts, that it really can consist in nothing but in a faculty's having its proper object, you will clearly see, that in the coolest way of consideration, without either the heat of fanciful enthusiasm, or the warmth of real devotion, nothing is more certain, than that an Infinite Being may himself be, if he pleases, the supply to all the capacities of our nature. All the common enjoyments of life, are from the faculties he hath endued us with, and the objects he hath made suitable to them. He may himself be to us infinitely more than all these: he may be to us all that we want. As our understanding can contemplate itself, and our affections be exercised upon themselves by reflection, so may each be employed in the same manner upon any other mind: and since the Supreme Mind, the Author and Cause of all things, is the highest possible object to himself, he may be an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls; a subject to our understanding, and an object to our affections.

Consider then: when we shall have put off this mortal body; when we shall be divested of sensual appetites, and those possessions, which are now the means of gratification, shall be of no avail; when this restless scene of business and vain pleasures, which now diverts us from ourselves, shall be all over; we, our proper self, shall still remain: we shall still continue the same creatures we are, with wants to be supplied, and capacities of happiness. We must have faculties of perception, though not sensi-

tive ones; and pleasure or uneasiness from our perceptions, as now we have.

There are certain ideas, which we express by the words, order, harmony, proportion, beauty, the furthest removed from any thing sensual. Now what is there in those intellectual images, forms, or ideas, which begets that approbation, love, delight, and even rapture, which is seen in some persons' faces upon having those objects present to their minds? "Mere enthusiasm!" Be it what it will: there are objects, works of nature and of art, which all mankind have delight from, quite distinct from their affording gratification to sensual appetites; and from quite another view of them, than as being for their interest and further advantage. The faculties from which we are capable of these pleasures, and the pleasures themselves, are as natural, and as much to be accounted for, as any sensual appetite whatever, and the pleasure from its gratification. Words to be sure are wanting upon this subject; to say, that every thing of grace and beauty throughout the whole of nature, every thing excellent and amiable, shared in differently lower degrees by the whole creation, meet in the Author and Cause of all things; this is an adequate, and perhaps a proper way of speaking of the Divine Nature: but it is manifest that absolute rectitude, the perfection of being, must be in all senses, and in every respect, the highest object to the mind.

In this world it is only the effects of wisdom and power and greatness which we discern: it is not impossible, that hereafter the qualities themselves in the Supreme Being may be the immediate object of contemplation. What amazing wonders are opened to view by late improvements! What an object is the universe to a creature, if there be a creature who can comprehend its system! But it must be an infinitely higher exercise of the understanding, to view the scheme of it in that mind, which projected it before its foundations were laid. And surely we have meaning to the words, when we speak of going further; and viewing, not only this system in his mind, but the wisdom and intelligence itself, from whence it proceeded. The same may be said of power. But since we

dom and power are not God, he is a wise, a powerful Being; the Divine Nature may therefore be a further object to the understanding. It is nothing to observe that our senses give us but an imperfect knowledge of things; effects themselves, if we knew them thoroughly, would give us but imperfect notions of wisdom and power; much less of his being, in whom they reside. I am not speaking of any fanciful notion of seeing all things in God; but only representing to you, how much an higher object to the understanding an infinite Being himself is, than the things which he has made; and this is no more than saying, that the Creator is superior to the works of his hands.

This may be illustrated by a low example. Suppose a machine, the sight of which would raise, and discoveries in its contrivance gratify, our curiosity: the real delight, in this case, would arise from its being the effect of skill and contrivance. This skill in the mind of the artificer would be an higher object, if we had any senses or ways to discern it. For, observe, the contemplation of that principle, faculty, or power, which produced any effect, must be an higher exercise of the understanding, than the contemplation of the effect itself. The cause must be an higher object to the mind than the effect.

But, whoever considers distinctly what the delight of knowledge is, will see reason to be satisfied that it cannot be the chief good of man: all this, as it is applicable, so it was mentioned with regard to the attribute of goodness. I say, goodness. Our being and all our enjoyments are the effects of it: just men bear its resemblance: but how little do we know of the original, of what it is in itself? Recall what was before observed concerning the affection to moral characters; which, in low low a degree soever, yet is plainly natural to man, and the most excellent part of his nature: suppose this improved, as it may be improved, to any degree whatever, in the spirits of just men made perfect; and then suppose that they had a real view of that righteousness which is an everlasting righteousness; of the con-

formity of the Divine Will to the law of truth, in which the moral attributes of God consist; of that goodness in the Sovereign Mind, which gave birth to the universe: add, what will be true of all good men hereafter, a consciousness of having an interest in what they are contemplating; suppose them able to say, *This God is our God for ever and ever*: would they then be any longer to seek for what was their chief happiness, their final good? Could the utmost stretch of their capacities look further? Would not infinite perfect goodness be their very end, the last end and object of their affections; beyond which they could neither have, nor desire; beyond which they could not form a wish, or thought?

Consider wherein that presence of a friend consists, which has often so strong an effect, as wholly to possess the mind, and entirely suspend all other affections and regards; and which itself affords the highest satisfaction and enjoyment. He is within reach of the senses. Now, as our capacities of perception improve, we shall have, perhaps by some faculty entirely new, a perception of God's presence with us in a nearer and stricter way; since it is certain he is more intimately present with us than any thing else can be. Proof of the existence and presence of any thing is quite different from the immediate perception, the consciousness of it. What then will be the joy of heart, which his presence, and the light of his countenance, who is the life of the universe, will inspire good men with, when they shall have a sensation, that he is the sustainer of their being, that they exist in him; when they shall feel his influence to cheer, and enliven, and support, their frame, in a manner of which we have now no conception? He will be, in a literal sense, *their strength and their portion for ever*.

When we speak of things so much above our comprehension, as the employment and happiness of a future state, doubtless it behoves us to speak with all modesty and distrust of ourselves. But the Scripture represents the happiness of that state under the notions of *seeing God, seeing him as he is, knowing as we*

are known, and seeing face to face. These words are not general or undetermined, but express a particular determinate happiness. And I will be bold to say, that nothing can account for, or come up to these expressions, but only this, that God himself will be an object to our faculties, that he himself will be our happiness; as distinguished from the enjoyments of the present state, which seem to arise, not immediately from him, but from the objects he has adapted to give us delight.

To conclude: Let us suppose a person tired with care and sorrow, and the repetition of vain delights which fill up the round of life; sensible that every thing here below in its best estate is altogether vanity. Suppose him to feel that deficiency of human nature, before taken notice of, and to be convinced that God alone was the adequate supply to it; what could be more applicable to a good man, in this state of mind; or better express his present wants and distant hopes; his passage through this world as a progress towards a state of perfection; than the following passages in the devotions of the royal Prophet? They are plainly in an higher and more proper sense applicable to this, than they could be to any thing else. *I have seen an end of all perfection. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in com-*

parison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God: yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before him? How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house: and thou shalt give them drink of thy pleasures, as out of the river. For with thee is the well of life: and in thy light shall we see light. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and receivest into thee, he shall dwell in thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee; they shall walk in the light of thy countenance. Their delight shall be daily in thy name, and in thy righteousness shall they make their boast. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy loving-kindness they shall be exalted. As for me, I will behold thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it. Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

FAMILY LECTURES:

PART II.

SERMON LXXXII.

By PARLET ST. JOHN, D.D.

Rector of Yeldon in Bedfordshire.

On the Wisdom of Integrity.

Job, xxvii. 5, 6.

Till die, I will not remove my integrity from me: my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.

These were the words of good and holy Job, the most innocent, perhaps, and yet at the same time the most afflicted man that ever was; I might have added the most miserable of all men, had he not been innocent. And in them we cannot but observe, what a mighty satisfaction the good man takes in the peace of his conscience, and the performance of his duty, and the steadiness of his resolution. (Whatever should befall him,) never to let that go, never to be flattered nor frightened out of it by any temptation or discouragement whatsoever. And never surely was there a resolution more vigorously maintained, or more eminently rewarded: for to make good the character God himself had given of his servant, we find him remarkably put upon all the several trials that human nature is capable of undergoing. The devil had pretended, that integrity supported with a prosperous condition, was but an imperfect discovery of the man, and never would desist, until he had obtained a commission from God to assault and prove him with the extremities of adversity. And no sooner had he obtained it, but immediately he enters upon the execution of it with all the rage and fury he is master of. In one moment he lays waste the fortunes of his house, and the hopes of his posterity, he drives down this mighty prince from his seat upon the dunghill, and there afflicts him with poverty and disease. Then he calls a few of his friends he had formerly loved him, (and the wife of his bosom, and the rest,) instead

of making the consolation of his affliction, (the remembrance of his former state,) in this barren and desolate condition, it was the good man's resolution, to have somewhat in reserve, which he could safely call his own, and which it was neither in the power of the devil to ravish, nor of the Chaldeans and Sabeans to plunder, nor of outward violence to destroy.

In the want of all the good things he had formerly abounded with, he was his comfort still (and a mighty comfort surely was) to remember, that he had engaged them innocently, and employed them faithfully. Under the heavy load of all the evils he at present suffered, it was no doubt, a great refreshment to his spirits, to consider that it was not for any notorious provocation of his God, or injury to his neighbour, that they were come upon him. Under all the reproaches of his enemies, and the uncharitableness of his friends, he could at all times appeal to his conscience for address; nay, in confidence of his integrity, he boldly durst look up to God himself, and maintain his ways before him, bid him judge, whether he had not walked innocently, (Job, xiii. 13.) and if there were any wickedness in his hands; notwithstanding an humble assurance also, that God, in his own good time, would take away his plagues from him, would speedily remove the afflictions with which he had been pleased to visit him, more, he knew, for the trial of his patience, than the punishment of his sins; that he would graciously turn again at the last, and reward him after his righteous dealing, and according to the cleanness of his hands in his eye-sight. (Job, xviii. 25.) Such hope and confidence had holy Job at a time when all other hope and confidence failed him, in the sense of his innocence, and the integrity of his ways; and no wonder therefore if we find him so very loth to let it go; no wonder if he held it fast, as his best and most valuable treasure, as something much dearer to him than life itself, because it was this alone could support the miseries of life, and in God's good time make way for the removal of them. Till I die, says he, I will not remove my integrity from me, &c.

In discoursing to you on these words, the plain and familiar use I would beg leave to make of them, shall be only this, to shew you the wisdom of this resolution, of holding fast our integrity, and never letting it go, upon any prospect or temptation whatsoever.

Had this great example of patience and fidelity been given us in these loose unsettled times of ours, men, instead of imitating the steadiness, would have laughed, I am afraid, at the impolicy of his principles. *They fools* would have counted *his life madness*, (Wisd. v. 4.) and wondered what he meant by *serving God for nought*, and still *retaining his integrity*, when he found himself so very ill encouraged for it.

I would not willingly be thought to speak uncharitably of the age and country we live in, but I heartily wish we were less able to justify the severity of this reflection. For what, alas! is become of those old antiquated notions of honour and conscience, of virtue and religion, so justly extolled in the writings of the heathens, and so eminently conspicuous in the sufferings of the Christians? I doubt, upon inquiry it will be found, that we have little more than the name and the profession of them alive among us: here and there perhaps we may meet with an honest well-meaning man, who shall dare upon occasion still to speak and suffer for them; but the crafty and the cunning, and the great pretenders to the wisdom of this world, have long since exploded them, and taken up a more convenient set of principles in their room. They, good men, to give them their due, can be as faithful to their God, as dutiful to their prince, and as honest to their neighbour, as one would wish them, as long as there is nothing to be lost, as long as there is any thing to be got by being so. They, good Christians, can come to church to-day for a good place, and with every whit as good a conscience go and betray that church to-morrow for a better. To favour a design, they can be loud, and warm, and stickle for this or that religion, and when they have no further occasion for it, as easily bring themselves to shake hands with all: they never trouble themselves with considering what is virtuous, but what is safe;

influenced in their actions by no other principle but the hopes of advantage, or the fears of inconvenience, and ready to stand about with the first fair wind that shall promise but to carry them on with success, and bring them off again with safety.

If this now be the *wisdom of this world*, as confident and as popular as it is, it will be found upon inquiry to be *but foolishness with God*. (1 Cor. iii. 19.) The way, which God hath pointed out, whereby we may arrive at happiness, is quite opposite to this; the tracks and foot-steps of our duty are all along as plain and as legible as we can wish; and if we will but follow them, will lead us on as strait and as direct a path as we can go. So that the very windings and turnings, through which unfaithfulness wanders, are enough to convince us, that if mistakes its course, and instead of carrying us, as it pretends, a shorter way, is losing sight apace of happiness, and insensibly making on to misery.

And how indeed can these men possibly fail of being in the wrong, when the very first step they advance proceeds upon mistake? And their mistake is this; they falsely divide their duty from their interest, the two things in the world of all others most strictly inseparable. For it is as certain as the appointment of God, and the nature of the thing itself can make it, that every man is so far happy as he is virtuous, and miserable as he is vicious. Upon this foundation it is, that the happiness of God himself is conceived to stand; for could we but suppose it possible for that infinite Being to decline but never so little from those eternal rules of holiness and equity, which he steadily pursues, God himself would from that very instant immediately cease to be happy, and begin to be miserable. Had the devil himself but held fast his integrity, he had been happy still; nor can he ever destroy the happiness of man, but by persuading him to that by which he lost his own. God may sometimes *suffer him to put forth his hand, and to touch all that we have*, (Job, i 2.); he may *consume our families, and plunder our estates, and torment our bodies*; all this we find he did to holy Job; but then this was the

worst and the utmost he could do. And what, alas! is all this to the forfeiture of a good conscience, and the loss of our integrity? If we keep but masters still of these, in spite of any outward calamities which can befall us, we may still make a shift to live tolerably easy, we may be sure we can never be extremely miserable under them; nay, it is our own fault too, if we are not in many respects considerably the better for them. But if ever we should be unhappily persuaded, upon what account soever, to let these go, our case is desperate: we have made ourselves as completely miserable as the devil himself can wish us; we leave ourselves naked and exposed to the severest of his cruelties, and what is worst of all, we have lost the only thing in the world that can serve to make them tolerable. And therefore it is, that God, who has made so sure provision for our happiness, that we have nobody but ourselves to thank if we are miserable, hath given us a more secure possession of our integrity, than of any one thing in the world besides, that we can call our own. Other things he hath left us the uncertain masters of; but the sense of our innocency, but the satisfaction of a good conscience, are essential to our happiness, and therefore always in our power: our integrity is that better part, which may be abandoned by cowardice, or given up by treachery, but can never, by downright violence, be taken from us. (Luke, x. 42.)

And therefore the wisdom of resolving to hold it fast and never to let it go, will abundantly appear, as from several other considerations I might mention, so more especially from these that follow:

First, Because in parting with our integrity we let go that without which prosperity itself can never make us happy.

Secondly, Because we let go that which, being once gone, affliction needs must render us insupportably miserable.

And ^{thirdly}, We let go that which alone can avail us in the day of judgment.

And first, I say, in parting with our integrity, we let go that without which

prosperity itself can never make us happy.

I am apt to believe, there is not any one mistake about the matters of religion has done it more real disservice, than that which men so very frequently run into, concerning the seeming happiness of the wicked in this life. How many false exceptions against Providence, and discouragements from virtue, has it sometimes started in the best of men? How often does it stagger the honest man, and make him almost repent of his integrity, and begin to think with the psalmist, that *he hath cleansed his heart in vain, and washed his hands in innocency, when he sees the ungodly* (as it sometimes happens) *in such prosperity?* (Psal. lxxiii. 13.) It is true indeed, and must not be denied, that as to the outward advantages of this life, its riches, its power, its honours, and the like, (though, by the way, integrity is generally observed to bid fairest for them,) yet they are not so strictly appropriated to the virtuous only, but that God does sometimes suffer them to become the inheritance of folly, and the recompence of vice. But even in this seeming equality of his distributions to the wicked and the good, God, we may observe, has made a very sensible distinction, and done abundantly enough to justify the conduct of his providence, and the wisdom of our integrity. Both of them, it is true, (both the wicked and the good,) may be equally rich, and honourable, and mighty in the world; but then both can never be equally happy; God punishes the wicked with those very blessings he admits him to partake of, and to make his prosperity itself a curse to him, denies him, in his anger, the power of enjoying it. For what enjoyment, alas! can the wicked ever taste in the lawless acquisitions of prosperous fraud, or successful violence? *Fret not thyself*, saith the psalmist, *because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil-doer.* (Ps. xxxix.) Never grudge him the rise of his honours, nor the increase of his estate; if they were twice as large and as many as they are, he abundantly deserves them all; never fear, the man has paid for them to purpose, and for ought we know, undone himself by the purchase. Perhaps he has re-

nounced his God, or dissembled his religion; it may be he has sold his country, or betrayed his master for them; perhaps he has been doing nothing else these many years, but plundering the fatherless, and oppressing the widow.

And now may we not fairly ask him, *To what purpose was all this waste?* (Matt. xxvi. 8.) This vast irreparable expence of honour and conscience, and whatever else is truly valuable? And what has he got after all this mighty labour of sinful industry, but the pleasure at last of appearing to be happy, and the pain of being really miserable?

Envy not therefore (says the Wise Man) *the glory of the sinner, for thou knowest not what shall be his end.* (Ecclesi. ix. 11.); nay, thou knowest not so much as how it fares at present with him. In the sight of the unwise (Wisd. iii. 2.) he seems to be happy; they stand ignorantly gazing at the brightness of his figure, and never suspect all the while the miseries it conceals; they see him only in his best light, and in his easy hours, when his pleasures or his company are amusing him, or when business diverts him from preying on himself. But could they but follow him into the agonies of his retirement, and there behold the wretched creature accusing, condemning, and tormenting himself, ever jealous of discovery, and afraid of punishment, they would pity and lament him heartily, notwithstanding all his splendor and his jollity, and begin to think with Solomon, that (if this be the joy of sinners) then *better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right* (Prov. xvi. 8); better to wander about from house to house, an honest cheerful pilgrim, without so much as bread to eat, or a place where to rest our weary head, than to sleep, and surfeit in the dwellings of unrighteousness.

And how should the thought of this make every honest man, (the poorest man amongst us, if he but honest,) how, I say, should it make him bless himself, and his integrity, and resolve with holy Job to hold it fast, and never let it go, and think himself, as he really is, infinitely more happy with the little that he has, than the ungodly can ever be, in the

abundance of the things that he possesseth: if it is but little that he has, he enjoys that little fearless and secure; fearless of any injuries from others, because he never knew what it was to practise any, and secure of His providence, who *careth for the righteous, and hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.* (Psalm, xiv. 8.—xxxv. 27.—ii.) But as for the ungodly, it is not so with them. *In the revenues of the wicked* (says the Wise Man) *there is trouble* (Prov. xv. 6.) The tears of the fatherless, and the clamours of the injured, are continually disputing his title, and disturbing his possession. He will be ever and anon reflecting, how unfairly he came by what he has, and how easily he may lose it. Every one he meets with, he naturally suspects of the same treacherous designs he himself is guilty of, and fancies they are contriving how to revenge the public, and make reprisals on him. As for God and his providence, he never thinks on them, but with horror and amazement; for how can he expect God should long secure him in those possessions he has obtained in defiance of his laws, and by the assistance of his enemies, and which he had neither the modesty to ask of him, nor the gratitude to thank him for?

And here I dare appeal to the greatest, and the best paid sinner of them all, and for once will venture to admit his evidence. Let him tell us, if he can, he who has been so long trading with the devil for his integrity, whether he thinks he ever yet did give him a fair equivalent for it. When did he ever reap so great advantage from it, as not a thousand times since to repent him of his bargain? How often, if the truth were known, and how heartily has he wished, that every body had their own, and he the peace of his conscience again? Or lastly, let him tell us, if he can, what one good day he remembers to have seen, since he foolishly parted with the pleasures of his innocency? No; without these, it is impossible he should be happy: heaven itself, could a man be supposed to go guilty thither, would never make him so. And if this be then the case; if those few, who let go a good conscience at their own price, and the best the devil

can afford to give them, if they have yet no better bargain than this to brag of, what a wretched uncomfortable one must those poor creatures make, who sell their integrity for nought, and take no money for it. (Ps. xlv. 12.) If the riches, and the honour, and the best assignments the devil can make us, are themselves but punishments, I hope the disgraces and the miseries he generally pays us in, will pass upon nobody for very desirable encouragements. But this consideration will more naturally fall under the second head I proposed to speak to; which was,

That, in parting with our integrity, we let go that which, being once gone, affliction needs must render us insupportably miserable.

There is not any thing in the life of man he may with so much certainty depend upon, as a share in the troubles that inseparably accompany it. And to hear the complacent men say every hour of the day making on this subject, one would really believe there was no one truth in the world they are more experimentally convinced of. And yet, alas! how very few among them do we see make any provision at all for that, which all are sensible that nobody can avoid, or however, not that wise and that safe provision which alone may be depended on for service and support? As long as the world runs smoothly on their side, on they travel, thoughtless and secure, never considering, that though it is fair and sunshine now, the weather soon may change, and a storm they little dream of break suddenly upon them. *Tush*, say the fools to themselves, in their vain security, *we shall never be cast down, there shall no harm happen unto us* (Ps. x. 6); they think, they are sufficiently provided with shelter and retreat; they have been a long time strengthening themselves in the multitude of their riches, in the number of their dependants, and the interest of their alliances. But, alas! no sooner do the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds begin to blow and beat upon them, (Mat. vii. 25.) but these blind presectors to their sorrow find, that they have all this while been working on a false foundation, and fortifying on the sand. Whereas the wise and the honest man,

who builds upon the sure foundations of his own integrity, stands unshaken and secure. The rains may descend, the floods may come, the winds may blow and beat upon him, but the bottom he leans upon is sound and good, and will bear the severest stress of wind and weather. Afflictions may dash and spend themselves upon him, but his hope and his confidence (like the rock it is built upon) *may not be removed but standeth fast for ever.* (Ps. cxv. 1.)

This, Job in his prosperity was happily aware of, and delayed not to make provision for it accordingly. The most flourishing of his fortunes could never make him forget that they were slippery and uncertain; that a time might come, when his riches would fly away, his glory vanish, and his friends forsake him; and therefore he wisely bethought himself to make sure of one; one friend he knew he had, a conscience I mean, well assured of its integrity, which had never basely flattered him in his prosperity, and was the more unlikely therefore to forsake him in adversity. This therefore he resolved to *hold fast, and never let it go.* And how soon did he live to make trial of this friendship, and bless the choice that had so happily secured it! For in the day of that distress which so surprisingly befel him, when his neighbours and his kindred, and his own familiar friends in whom he trusted, forsook him hastily and fled, this faithfully accompanied him into the worst of fortunes, and wonderfully supported him under them; then the blessing of him that was ready to perish came seasonably upon him, because he had delivered the poor when he cried, (Job, xxix. 13.) the fatherless, and him that had none to help. In the multitude of the sorrows that he had in his heart, these comforts still refreshed his soul, (Ps. xciv. 19.) that he had never done any thing that he knew of to deserve so severe a punishment; had never attempted sinfully to avoid his troubles before they came, nor unlawfully to break loose from them after they were fallen upon him. And therefore since his heart condemned him not, he would still continue to have confidence towards God (1 John, iii. 21.); and in the hopes of his mercy, and the assurance

of his favour, *wait with patience all the days of his appointed time, until his change should come* (Job, xiv. 14.); when God should once more *remember Job and all his troubles*, and comfort him again after the time that he had *plagued him*, (Psalm, cxxxii. 1.) and *for the years wherein he had suffered adversity*, (Psalm, xc. 15.)

The spirit of a man, with these reflections to support it, will go a great way towards *sustaining his infirmities*, and carry him on through this short vale of life and misery, and the shadow of death itself, with comfort and security. But *a wounded spirit who can bear?* (Prov. xviii. 14.) When that which alone can give us any comfort, itself is comfortless; when the devil has assaulted us, and our God forsaken us, and our own minds the mean while write bitter things against us; when every stroke we feel, carries in it the marks of a punishment; and the reproaches of sin; and we have hardly so much as the remembrance of any one good action we have done, to refresh our drooping spirits; what can sustain a man oppressed with these sorrows, and acquainted with such griefs? And yet how light are these sorrows, how easy are these griefs, under all the guilty miseries of life, if compared with those a wounded spirit feels when death and judgment look it in the face! How will the man, doth he think, behave himself, when he *feels his soul drawn nigh unto hell, and the pains of death get hold upon him?* (Psalm, lxxxviii. 3.) What would he now give for the supports of that integrity, which once he might have kept, but which then he wantonly prostituted to a lust, or sacrificed to a passion? What would he now give for the comforts of that faith which, it may be, he has long ago renounced for impunity, or dissembled for preferment? (Psalm xvi. 15.) Right precious then in his sight will be the death of God's saints, and the pains of their martyrdom itself desirable. How will he wish a thousand and a thousand times, that he had died like one of these, for the testimony of a good conscience, rather than thus have expired under the torments of a bad one? He then should have had the righteousness of his cause, and the pre-

sence of his God, and the assurance of his reward, to support and comfort him. And, O! what a blessed confidence, what an unshaken security will these refreshments give us at our departure hence! Then, when we walk through the gloominess of death itself, even then *to fear no evil!* (Psalm, xlviii.) Then to be able to look back on the world we are about to leave, and with a satisfaction not altogether unlike to that of its Creator, to see that all that we have done in its good, (Gen. i.) nothing that we have done in it is unpardonably wicked: then to be able to say unto God with our departing breath, and with good Hezekiah's humble confidence, *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight* (Isaiah, xxxviii. 3.); I say, if there be any thing in this world can deserve a serious wish, it is a conscience always thus prepared to leave it; and since God and our integrity are our best and our last supports, both in life and in death, that he will never suffer us, for any pleasures of life, for any pains of death, to fall from him.

But thirdly and lastly, He that lets go his integrity, parts with that which alone can avail him in the day of judgment.

And indeed if there were nothing in any of the foregoing considerations to evince the necessity of resolving to hold it fast, this one consideration alone, exclusive of all others, were abundantly sufficient. For let us now allow the dishonest person as many and as great advantages as ever any man could yet propose to himself, as! many more, God knows, than ever any yet could find by being so, we will suppose his villainies for once (which yet they never were) infallibly secure of secrecy and success; we will load him with as many ill-gotten honours and estates, as avarice and ambition itself can wish for; we will give him too, upon the supposal, that which in reality he is utterly incapable of, the power of enjoying all this without disturbance or remorse, and of living as pleasantly, and of dying as easily, as much honest men can do without

them; why, truly all this put together will amount to a very fair provision for the short stay we are to make in this life; but then it is a provision for this life only. What preparation (if a man may ask him) has the fool been all this while a-making for eternity? He that is so dexterous at striking in with every pitiful advantage, and declining every little inconvenience in his way, has he been wise enough, with all his cunning to secure eternal happiness? Has he been careful enough, with all his caution, to avoid eternal misery? If he has not, God knows, he has been plotting and contriving, and taking abundance of pains, to very little purpose. For, alas! our great and final interest lies out in another country, and beyond the grave; and it is the grossest misapplying of our consideration imaginable, to contrive only how we shall rub on the few days, and months, and years we have to live, and never once to bethink ourselves what will at last become of us, and in what condition we shall subsist for ever?

Now whatever hopes a man may have of carrying on an interest in this world, by acting contrary to his duty, no man, I dare say, was ever weak enough to imagine it could be of any service to him in another. Nay, does not every man's conscience directly tell him that it will not? Upon every unlawful action he commits, does he not immediately feel a regular process commence within him? and is he not as certainly accused, convicted, and condemned upon the spot? And happy we! *to-day if we will hear this mighty voice, and not harden our hearts*, (Psalm. xciv. 8.) but he warned by its whispers to avoid the thunder that will one day accompany it: for, if we will not hearken to them now, the time will come, when our consciences will be heard by us whether we will or no; when the

devil shall join in charging home the evidence, and God himself appear to confirm the sentence. And then shall all the celebrated arts of dissimulation and hypocrisy be detected and exposed, and lie down in the shame and misery of those that practised them: and the strictest honesty be found upon the whole to have been the truest policy. Then, happy they! who instead of purchasing any thing in this life at the hazard of their soul, were glad to lose even life itself, that they might save it! How bold and fearless will they stand before the dread tribunal, secure of being *justified in their trial, and clear when they are judged!* (Psalm, li. 4.) How will it transport them, to hear their innocence vindicated, and their integrity proclaimed, and their wisdom applauded in the ears of all men! With what pleasure then will they *look back on the past travail of their soul, and be satisfied!* (Isaiah, lvi. 11.) on all the little hardships and discouragements they have met with here below, in the cause of afflicted virtue, and of persecuted truth! And how will they bless the torments, and the death itself, that at last has brought them, through so light a trial, to so inconceivable an happiness! *In the eyes of men they were punished, and their departure was taken for misery* (Wisd. iii. 4.); but now are they *numbered with the children of God*, and their lot is amongst *his saints!* (chap. v. 5.) where, having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: where God himself shall graciously condescend to bid them welcome to their happiness, and in these transporting words, at once acknowledge and recompence their integrity: *Well now thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things! I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (Matt. xxv. 21.)

SERMON LXXXIII.

By RICHARD NEWTON, D.D.
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ford College, Oxford.

On Patience.

LUKE, xxi. 19.

In your patience possess ye your souls.

OUR blessed Saviour having, from the 5th verse of this chapter, foretold the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem; and from the 12th enumerated to his disciples the several evils they should undergo, before this should come to pass; *as that men should lay hands on them, and persecute them, delivering them up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake: that they should be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends, and that some of them should be put to death:* he concludes with an assurance, *that there should not an hair of their head perish:* and with an exhortation to them to possess in the mean time *their souls in patience. In your patience possess ye your souls.*

From these words thus spoken by our blessed Saviour, I shall discourse to you concerning the duty of patience under those afflictions to which we are all exposed, and for the bearing of which, when we meet with them, we ought to be so prepared, that how many, and how great soever they be, how suddenly soever they come upon us, and how long soever they stay with us, we may *possess our souls in patience.*

In treating this subject, I shall consider,

I. What Christian patience is, and wherein it consists.

II. I shall endeavour to shew what motives there are to induce us to the practice of this duty.

III. I shall lay before you some considerations, some rules, by which this

virtue, this art of patience, if I may so call it, may be most effectually acquired.

I. Then I am to shew what is meant by patience, and wherein it consists.

Patience, then (as far as it is a duty), I take to be a moderation of grief under afflictions.

To grieve under afflictions, is natural to us, and cannot be avoided by us; but that this grief keep within its due bounds; that it do not break out into excess; that it be not disproportioned to the occasions of it; that it be confined within those rules which reason and religion prescribe; that it be not inordinate either as to its measure or its continuance, is the work of that patience, in which we are required to *possess our souls.*

Sometimes, the loss of what is pleasant, and the fear of what is hurtful to us, affect us with an irregular grief. Our concern on these occasions hath often so strong an influence upon us, as to disturb our reason, and to make us even disregard our religion, rather than not indulge our passion.

Sometimes, the injuries we receive from our neighbour affect us with an immoderate grief, and make us resent them too keenly, and pursue our revenge of them too warmly.

Sometimes, again, the evils we suffer, considered as the allotments of Providence, affect us with an unwarrantable grief, and make us repine against the Almighty, and murmur at that justice which punishes our sins according to their desert; nay, even at that goodness which punishes them much less than they deserve.

And since these are the evil effects of immoderate grief, as to ourselves, to our brethren, and to Almighty God, the better to shew you, wherein patience or this moderation of grief consists, I shall explain it according to these three several respects. And,

1. I shall shew, what this moderation of grief is, with reference to ourselves; and what influence it ought to have upon us in the government of our passions; in which respect, patience is the same with what we usually call constancy, or Christian fortitude.

2. I shall consider it, with relation to our neighbours; or how we ought to bear the injuries we receive from them. Patience, in this view of it, is the same with Christian meekness.

3. I shall consider it in regard to God; or how we ought to behave ourselves towards him under those afflictions which he is pleased to visit us withal. Patience, in this respect, is the same with Christian resignation.

1. I am to shew, what this moderation of grief is, in reference to ourselves; or what influence it ought to have upon us in the government of our passions. In which respect, patience is the same with what we usually call constancy, or Christian fortitude.

When we define patience to be a moderation of grief under afflictions, we suppose it lawful for us to be sensible of the evils we suffer.

Insensibility under afflictions (of which, as it is very uncommon, and rather affected than real in those who pretend to it, much needs not be said) lies as wide from moderation on the one side, as excess of grief doth on the other. It is not so usual to be too little, as it is to be too much grieved under the calamities that befall us: but he who is too little, is as far from true patience, because he is as far from moderation, as he who is too much afflicted with the evils under which he labours. Moderation doth not consist in a total unconcernedness about the object we are to shew our moderation in; but in proportioning our concern to the object we are concerned about. So that it is as possible for us to fall short of a due mean as to go beyond it.

Not to be grieved at the calamities which befall ourselves is unnatural, and inconsistent with that self-love which is the first principle of all our actions, and inseparable from us. Not to be concerned at the calamities which befall other men, is ill-natured, and contrary to that great precept of our Saviour, which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

It is as much the duty of a Christian to *weep with them that weep*, as to *rejoice with them that rejoice*. Some there are indeed who tell us, that when

the Apostle bids us *weep with them that weep*, he doth not prescribe to us the affection of grief, but the effects of it, as good counsel, assistance, and the like: but certainly he bids us *weep with them that weep*, in the same sense as he bids us *rejoice with them that rejoice*. If the internal affection is commanded or allowed in the one case, why not in the other? Our Saviour, when he *saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping*, over the grave of Lazarus, *groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and wept*. Here was the internal affection of grief, as well as the outward indication of it. Our Saviour felt that inward pain which he outwardly expressed. He first *groaned in his spirit, and was troubled*, before his sorrow brake forth in tears. This passion of grief had certainly never been lodged within us, if it was never to have been exercised by us. Our Creator had not made us liable to so many occasions of sorrow, if it were unlawful for us, upon any occasion, to be sorrowful. He made us subject to this passion, no doubt, that being grieved at those things which were not good for us, we might endeavour to avoid the things which were thus accompanied with grief; that, being tenderly affected with objects of compassion, we might be forcibly excited to relieve those whom we were thus, by a natural sympathy, obliged to pity; that sorrow might be a punishment for our past sins; and consequently promote our amendment for the time to come; that it should be the effect of our repentance, and therefore the cause of our conversion.

To justify this passion from any imputation of guilt, nothing more needs to be said. Nothing can be said more to the purpose, than what hath been already intimated: that our blessed Saviour, who was free from all sin, having assumed our nature, *was acquainted with grief*; and bearing our iniquities, was *emphatically a man of sorrows*.

Be it therefore supposed, that grief is allowable, if kept within its due bounds: and let us now proceed to shew, what those bounds are.

Now, in order to set the proper boundaries to this passion, which is so apt to exceed; to shew how far a man may be

grieved, and yet *possess his soul in patience*; it is necessary to take notice, that the cause of our grief ought to be warrantable, and that our grief ought to be proportionate to that cause.

Now the warrantable occasion of grief is the loss of some good which we have reason to be pleased with; or the accession of some evil, which we are with good reason averse to.

Amongst those things, therefore, the loss of which may innocently be deplored by us, and justly affect us with grief, we may reckon the goods of fortune, so far at least as this loss deprives us of the power of doing good; or of the necessities or comforts of life; or as it may expose us to the temptation of retrieving them by unlawful means; or of repairing our fortunes at the hazard and expence of our precious souls.

We may also be innocently grieved; we cannot, perhaps with innocence, but be grieved at the loss of friends, as they were linked to us by the ties of nature and blood; and much more, as they were by their society, their counsels, and their examples, instrumental to our virtue and to our happiness; as they were agreeable companions, who made our passage through this troublesome world more easy and delightful to us; and as they were useful guides, who pointed out to us the way, and led us, as it were, by the hand, to those paths that might bring us to everlasting life.

But, above all, national calamities, and those particularly which endanger our religion, ought, in a more especial manner, to affect us with grief. Thus, good old Eli heard the sad news of the death of his sons, and of the defeat of the Israelites, though not without grief, yet without sinking under the weight of it. but when he was told that the ark of God was taken, he fell down backwards, and his neck brake, and he died.

To shew what ought to be the precise measure of our grief, in proportion to those several evils which afflict us, would be endless. It may suffice to lay down this general rule, that no concern should ever be so violent upon any occasion, how just and how great soever, as to take away the use, or hinder the free operations of our reason.

We ought not, therefore, under our afflictions, to suffer ourselves to be transported; to refuse comfort; to be industrious to improve our sorrow, and to treasure up heaviness to our souls; to dwell upon our affliction, and, by a strange unaccountable indulgence of our grief, to pass from one fond uneasy thought to another, till, by a great deal of misplaced diligence, we work ourselves up to an unmanly softness, to an unwarrantable dejection of mind, to a total oppression of spirits.

We ought, on the contrary, to oppose and resist this passion in its first rise; and to bear up against it when we find it growing upon us; to be deaf to its demands of our attention; and to quit the subject that begins to be uneasy, before it comes to be intolerable. So that our sorrow, though it move us, shall not wholly possess us; though it affect us, shall not overwhelm us; though *heaviness may endure for a night, but joy, that joy which arises from the comfort of having set the grievous matter right in our own minds, shall come in the morning.*

But we shall not discharge this duty of Christian fortitude as we ought, nor *possess our souls in patience*, to the degree required by our great Master, barely by keeping the mastery over our passion of grief, and by the use of our reason so far, as that the anguish of present afflictions doth not transport us; unless we do moreover so fortify our minds against distant evils, that the prospect of future calamities may not make us swerve from our duty.

For the effect of immoderate grief under afflictions, doth not only shew itself in depriving us of the succours of reason, whilst we are under the pressure of a calamity which at present lies heavy upon us; but also in tempting us to despair and distrust; to unsteadiness and wavering in the faith; to the desertion of that truth, and to the neglect of that duty, which expose us to those evils so unwellcome to human nature.

Now the virtue which alone can prevent these evil effects of our immoderate grief, founded in the terrible apprehension of distant evils, or, in other words, of our weakness and pusillanimity, is

that fortitude which we are now recommending; whereby we resolve well, and are steady to our resolutions; whereby we resist the soft insinuations of sense from within, and the subtle contrivances of a deceitful wicked world from without; by which we are so supported, as that neither the frowns of adverse fortune shall be able to terrify us, nor the threats of insulting power force us into a compliance with any thing which we know to be sinful; nor any prospect of danger make us desert that truth, which we acknowledge ourselves bound to maintain.

In the strength of this Christian grace, though the waves of persecution do on all sides beat upon us, we shall stand like a rock, unmoved and unshaken.

It was from this noble principle, that St. Paul was enabled to make that brave challenge and declaration, which we read in his epistle to the Romans. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Having thus far endeavoured to shew, wherein patience or moderation of grief consists with respect to ourselves, I shall proceed, in the

Second place, to shew more briefly, what it is in relation to our neighbours, or how we ought to bear the injuries we receive from men; in which sense patience is the same with Christian meekness.

Now it is the proper work of patience, in this view of it, to possess our minds with these considerations: That our sins *deserve greater severities, than any which God suffers evil men to inflict upon us. That if God thinks fit, he can, and will do right to his servants who are oppressed; but that we are not always commissioned to do this right to ourselves. That therefore we are obliged to take care, that the passion of grief, under the injuries

we receive, doth not transport us to any unlawful act, or forbidden desire of revenge. That we are not at liberty so much as to curse the Chaldeans and Sabeans, though they fall upon our oxen and our asses, though they destroy our children and our servants: because the same God who thinks fit to bring upon us such afflictions, doth also think fit to make use of such instruments to execute his wise, and holy, and righteous purposes. That we are neither proper interpreters of the injuries we receive, nor proper judges of the returns which are to be made to them. That we are too partial to estimate the measures of each with that equity and justice we ought. That we are apt to use a double weight and a double measure, in trying the greatness of those evils which others do to us, and which we do to others. And that vengeance being what we know not how to use aright, we must leave it to him to whom it belongs; and who knows how to dispense it, with the exactest weight and measure. And, lastly, that we are, by the precepts of evangelical meekness, enjoined not only to be slow to anger; not only to be upon our guard that we be not too far transported by it, but even to pray for them who despitely use us: to bless them that curse us; to do good to them that hate us; and to be so far from being overcome of evil, as to be conquerors in this conflict with wicked and unreasonable men, and to overcome evil with good.

Thus our blessed Saviour, when he had endured all the insolence and derision, all the indignities and affronts, all the outrages and scorn that could possibly be offered to the very worst of men; and was led to suffer a death in its own nature the most painful; in its duration the most lingering; in the opinion of men the most ignominious; in the estimate of the divine law the most accursed; in the midst of his agonies, whilst the sense of them was the most pungent, acute, and afflictive, cried out, *Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

And thus, in imitation of him, that holy martyr, who first trod in those bloody steps, which this Leader and Captain of our Salvation had just before

marked out for his followers to trace, when he was stoned, *knelt down and* (to shew his earnestness,) *cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

And what the church has made the subject of our prayers, ought also to be the object of our endeavours; that, in all our sufferings here upon earth, for the sake of a good conscience (upon which account only we can suffer from the hands of men, if we suffer as Christians), we may learn by these examples to bless our persecutors, considering, *that if when we do well, and suffer for it, we take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* For even hereto were we called: *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

I shall now proceed, in

The third and last place, to shew what patience or moderation of grief is, when considered with relation to God; or how we ought to demean ourselves towards him, under those afflictions which he is pleased to visit us with; which is the duty of patience taken in the same sense with submission to God's will, or resignation.

And here the criminal effects of immoderate grief occasioned by afflictions, are a proud and irreverent behaviour under the hand of the Almighty; impious and unworthy thoughts of his glorious Majesty; daring and contemptuous reflections upon his wisdom and providence. For though nature will be very apt to plead for the reasonableness of a more than ordinary concern under more than ordinary pressures; yet according to the example of our blessed Saviour, even whilst we tremble at the prospect of what we are going to endure; whilst we ardently desire the removal of the bitter cup, we are with him also to pray, that the will of our Father, not our own will, be done.

We are to look forward, and to wait for the inheritance of the promises; and taking an impartial view of heavenly and earthly things, are to shew, by a cheerful

resignation, that our expectations are not confined to the narrow compass of this world. We are to consider our afflictions not only in themselves, in which regard they may appear frightful and insufferable, but also in their consequences, which may make them appear not only tolerable, but even desirable.

We are to recollect what we have learnt from the word of God, that though *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.*

We are to weigh our present sufferings, and our future hopes, in the balance of the sanctuary; and examining them by this true standard, we shall find, that the lightness of the one bears no proportion at all to the weight of the other. For *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen or felt, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, and the pains which are felt, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, and the pleasures which are not yet felt, but which shall hereafter be enjoyed by all those who submit themselves with patience to the chastisements of God, are eternal.*

There is no sin more unworthy of a man, or more unbecoming of a Christian, more contrary to the plain dictates of natural reason, or to the whole tenor and design of supernatural revelation, than murmuring and repining at the dispensations of Providence: and yet this is a vice, not peculiar to the profligate and profane, who blasphemously *set their mouth against the heavens; and whose tongue walketh through the earth;* but is, in some measure, to be found also in men of a better character, who have some awe of God, and some sense of religion upon their minds.

The holy Psalmist, that sweet melodious singer of Israel, was not wholly exempt from this great sin. He himself tells us, *that his feet were almost gone; that his steps had well nigh slipped.* For *he was envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked;* in-somuch, that he began to repent of his

own integrity, and to say, *that he had cleansed his heart in ruin, and washed his hands in innocency.*

Whilst the smart of present sufferings is keen and afflictive, men are apt to complain that their grief is not thoroughly weighed, or their calamities laid in the balances together. Nay, they have sometimes the confidence to plead their cause with God, and to contend and strive with their Maker, crying out, *O that we knew where we might find him! That we might come even to his seat! We would order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. We would know the words which he would answer us, and understand what he would say unto us.*

Vain mortals! Do they hope to strive against him, who giveth not account of any of his matters? Who hath enjoined him his way? Or who can say unto him, *what dost thou? Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me, or why hast thou used me, thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth: but wo unto him that striveth with his Maker. Is he a man as thou art, that thou shouldst answer him, and come together or contend with him in judgment? Hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Is it fit to say to a king, thou art wicked? And to princes, ye are ungodly? How much less to him, that accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?*

Is it not much more fit to humble ourselves under the sense of God's displeasure; to acknowledge the justice and the mercy of his chastisements; to resign ourselves with reverence and submission to the unerring providence of God; and to say, even when his hand lies heaviest upon us, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and thy judgments are thy judgments!*

Thus have I attempted to shew, wherein the duty of patience consists; what

its proper work is; how our conduct is to be regulated by it, with respect to ourselves, to our brethren, and to our God.

I should now proceed in the second place to consider, what motives there are to induce us to the exercise of this virtue; and then go on to lay down some rules for the attainment of it; but having not time to dispatch these heads, I shall not now enter upon them, but defer them to another opportunity.

SERMON LXXXIV.

By Doctor NEWTON.

On Patience.

LUKE, xxi. 19.

In your patience possess ye your souls

In speaking to these words of our blessed Saviour, (who by his example as well as by his doctrine was the best teacher of patience which the world ever beheld), I proposed to shew,

First, What patience is, and wherein it consists.

Secondly, What motives there are that may induce us to the practice of this duty.

Thirdly, What those rules and methods are by which this virtue, this art of patience, if I may so call it, may be most effectually acquired.

What patience is, wherein it consists, what are the effects of it, how our conduct and demeanour are to be regulated by it, in relation to ourselves, to our brethren, and to our God; with what constancy and steadiness of mind we ought to bear those calamities which we cannot avoid; with what meekness we ought to suffer those injuries wherewith we are loaded by men; with what cheerful resignation of mind we ought to submit ourselves to the chastisements of God, punishing us no more than we deserve, or much less than we deserve, for our sins; I have already shewn. I proceed now, in the

Second place, to propose those motives that may be most effectual to prevail with us to the exercise of this duty.

The most important motives to patience are to be well assured,

1. That our afflictions are willed or permitted by God to befall us.

2. That they are intended for our good.

3. That they are inevitable.

4. That they are just.

The first motive to patience is to be well assured that all the afflictions we meet with in this world, are willed or permitted by God to befall us.

That the Creator, as he has an almighty power to create, so hath he an unlimited liberty of afflicting or relieving, of preserving or destroying, what he has so created : for he created us for himself, and for his own glory ; and however our want of humility under any calamities may make us apt to murmur at the wise providence of God, and to dispute the reasonableness and equity of his proceedings with his creatures, that nevertheless do God what he will, he can do us no wrong ; and that not only from his essential goodness, whereby he is disposed to do good to all his creatures ; not only by reason of his self-sufficiency for his own happiness, whereby he is exempted from any need, or temptation to do us injury : but moreover, because he hath no manner of obligation to us ; and where there is no obligation there can be no injustice.

These considerations often suggested to our thoughts, and duly weighed in our minds, will make us sensible of the irresistible power and undeniable right which God has over all the sons of men, and of that lowest submission which is upon all occasions due from mankind to him.

We shall, therefore, be very careful of our behaviour under those calamities, which God for wise but unsearchable reasons hath thought fit to afflict us with : and shall think it our duty and our interest, with an humble resignation of our own wills, entirely to acquiesce in his ; we shall beware of reproaching unbounded mercy with severity, and of charging indefectible holiness with the reputation of hardship and wrong ; when we seriously consider that whatsoever we enjoy upon earth is the bountiful gift of Heaven ; that from thence we receive

our corn, our wine, and our oil, our fruitful vines, and our olive branches round about our tables. Upon our parting with any of these, we shall be induced rather to thank the Almighty, who hath permitted us to enjoy them so long ; than to repine at his providence, because he suffers us not to enjoy them any longer. If we heartily praised God for the many and signal benefits we receive from him (as we certainly should do, were we fully and constantly persuaded that they did assuredly come from him), we should never reproach him for those, which after long enjoyment we return.

If we sincerely acknowledged, what in words we profess to own, that he lends us whatever we call ours, reserving always the supreme dominion and right of disposing of it to himself, we should never murmur when he called upon us for his own again. Or if we fixed our eyes and thoughts upon the enjoyments he has left us, we should not be impatient for the loss of those which he has deprived us of.

If, therefore, he suffers evil men by fraud or violence to despoil us of our goods, we shall still thank him for our health and strength. If we labour under the infirmities of body, or the weight of years, we shall bless him for the children that support our age : or if he bereaves us of our children, and lets us close their eyes, who by the course of nature should rather have closed ours ; yet if he leaves us good and faithful friends, friends that will testify their affection by their concern for our distress, and their compassion by their assistance of us under it, and will speak comfortable words to us, and bear with our weaknesses, and minister to our relief, we shall still remember his holy name, and magnify him for his great mercies ; or if he shall deprive us of these also, and leave us destitute of all worldly comforts, and strip us as naked as we were born ; yet so long as we know that our Redeemer liveth, and can lie down with assurance that he shall stand at the latter day upon the ^{8th} *though he slay us, yet will we still trust in him.*

A second motive to patience under affliction is, that (not being able to search

into the deep and mysterious counsels of God, not to discover the ends and purposes which our all-wise Creator has in afflicting us, we do not know but they may be for our good; nay, that from the manifestation of his designs, which he in his word has made unto us) we have good reasons to be persuaded that they are always by him intended for, and, by a careful management on our parts, may always be subservient to our good.

There is no man that is born into the world, but is born to suffer more or less, and the sufferings of some men do so much overbalance their enjoyments, that if their hopes were confined to this world, it were better for them not to have been born; but since our expectations reach farther into another world, it is not only our advantage to have been born, but also to suffer; and that.

First, as afflictions are a trial of our faith, whereby we may discover, whether we are indeed most firmly persuaded of those truths, which with our lips we constantly profess to believe.

For he, who steadfastly believes another life after this, and is undoubtedly assured of future happiness upon the performance of his duty, will have his mind so taken up with that comfortable and joyful prospect, that he will leave but little room for those crosses he meets with here, to make any deep or lasting impression upon him. He that believes there is a reward reserved for the righteous; a bliss more exquisite, more durable, more complete, than any good upon earth; which cannot be taken away, cannot be interrupted, cannot be so much as intermitted; which, contrary to all earthly pleasures, shall be greater in enjoyment or possession than it was in expectation; and which shall always go on to please, and shall satisfy without saturating; must have but a mean notion of, and consequently must be but little affected with, all worldly enjoyments. The possession of these will not elate his spirits, nor the loss thereof sink them immoderately. That good, in which he finds so many excellent qualities, which are not to be found in any thing which this world affords, will much cheapen the value of these earthly blessings; and

whilst he is secure of that inestimable reversion, all present evils will appear tolerable to him.

This one single thought is the surest refuge for an afflicted soul to fly unto; and one would think there should be nothing but the doubt of this could make it continue to be afflicted. It is but reflecting upon our future hopes to give us present ease; that what we suffer is but transient; that what we shall be rewarded with will be eternal; for certainly we can never repine at the scanty proportion of pleasure which is measured out to us here, whilst we remember and think of that place, where there is *fullness of joy*.

But because the prospect of a future life can be comfortable to those only who do not doubt of their being happy in it; and because none can have a rational and well-grounded assurance of their being happy in another world, but those who have led a virtuous and godly life here; it will make us more sensible of the benefit of afflictions to reflect upon,

A second advantage arising from them, as they do highly promote our virtue.

For a course of life altogether easy and uninterrupted by any misfortunes, is apt to betray us into a dangerous security. To be free from the indispositions of body which others undergo; to be exempt from the losses which our neighbour sustains; not to meet with any of those disappointments which all who are about us meet with; is apt to make us too inconsiderate of the future, and too much taken up with the present; too proud, and too careless; too far presuming upon our own strength, and too little sensible of our dependance. Whereas some seasonable afflictions would put us in mind of our mortality, and should the Almighty stretch out his hand against us, we should quickly *know ourselves to be but men*.

In this case therefore we are not to look upon the afflictions which God Almighty is pleased to visit us withal, as the result of his wrath, but as the effect of his mercy, and consequently we ought to be so far from repining at them, that we should unfeignedly thank him, that he hath been pleased of his gracious good

ness to choose this way of making a sensible impression upon the stubbornness of our hearts, thereby to bring us more effectually to repentance.

A third motive to patience under afflictions, is, that we cannot avoid the calamities which God Almighty is pleased to bring upon us; they are the secret and irresistible determinations of his will; and as we have not wisdom enough to foresee, or to prevent, what is like to befall us; so neither have we power sufficient to remove, or shake off, what we find sits uneasy upon us. It is most advisable therefore to rest satisfied with our condition, however deplorable it may appear, not only because it pleased our Maker to bring us into it, not only because it may probably tend to our advantage, but because we cannot help ourselves.

For whatever we enjoy in this world, however pleasant and useful to us, being not properly our own, because neither is it of our own procuring, or in our own power to dispose of; and the truth of this being verified, by all that ever befell the sons and daughters of affliction; we cannot but be convinced of the extreme folly of impatience, since we must needs know, that *the Lord is king, he the earth never so unquiet*; that our vain, fruitless, impotent strugglings may provoke that almighty power which we are sure never to subdue; that the yoke will not sit more easy upon our necks, by our ineffectual endeavours to shake it off; but that the more fretful we are, the more we shall be galled, and shall encrease our burden by not bearing patiently, that which in itself, and with the strength which God would be ready, if asked, to endue us with, would be supportable to us.

In the fourth and last place, it will be another proper inducement to patience, for us to consider, that the afflictions which are brought upon us are just, and what our frequent provocations of the Almighty do highly deserve.

He who reflects how oft he has been guilty of those sins which God detests, and has peremptorily forbidden; how oft he has neglected those duties which God delights in, and has with great earnestness enjoined: he who looks back upon

his wilful deliberate commission of the one, and his frequent supine neglect of the other: he who considers how easily he has complied with the least temptations to be wicked, and how obstinately he has resisted the most powerful motions of the spirit of grace disposing him to holiness and virtue: he who compares his numberless bad actions with his few good ones, and finds, upon the comparison, such aggravations in those as render them highly deserving of punishment, and such abatements in these that they rather want to be excused, than merit to be rewarded: he who makes these reflections, which are very obvious and proper to be made, will not only be satisfied, that God is righteous in the judgments he inflicts upon him; but will also acknowledge, that his offences both in their number and in their nature do mightily exceed his afflictions.

And if he carries this consideration a little farther, and calls to mind, how formal and partial his confessions of his sins have been; how insincere his repentance; how unsteady his resolutions of amendment; how weak his endeavours towards a better life; how frequent and scandalous his relapses to his former vicious courses; he will not complain when he is gently afflicted, but will admire that he is not utterly destroyed. *Why then should a living man complain? A man for the punishment of his sins?*

Having thus far considered the most important motives to induce us to be patient under afflictions; I shall proceed to lay down some rules as proper to be observed, in order to the attainment of patience.

The first is, to expect that afflictions will some time or other befall us. We know our state and condition in this world. What we place any part of our happiness in here, is of very uncertain continuance to us. Fortune cannot raise us so high, but envy and malice reach us. Riches, which men so eagerly pursue, *make themselves wings and fly away*. Health, and vigour, and beauty, if for a season they escape the evil accidents that await them, must suffer a natural decay. Friends are not always faithful, nor children always obedient; and the most faithful and obedient are mortal.

If then in the midst of our prosperity we would entertain these thoughts, and, as it were, anticipate what we conceive would be grievous to us, and make it familiar to our imaginations (not to destroy the sense of providential blessings, but only to regulate our affections about them): the sharpness of every calamity would be so far at least abated, that we should not be surpris'd into any unmanly or unchristian behaviour under it. Reason and religion would seasonably step in to our assistance, and moderate that grief which human infirmity makes us liable to.

But if (we will not thus fortify ourselves against all these evil impressions, we shall be every moment unhappy. And if) instead of this we will go on to fill our hearts with mirth and to prove them with joy; carelessly to rely upon the present without any thoughts of the future; and value what we possess or hope for, not only above its proper value, but above those things that are inestimable; we must not think that the force of any arguments, or the application of any well-chosen moral reflections, or any apposite references to the highest authority that can be named, even to the oracles of God, will be able to restrain and govern that passion which a disappointment in any of these things will excite in us. Though perhaps when the case was not our own, we could, *with our aunts, have upholden him that was falling, and have strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon us, and as for it: it touches us, we are troubled.*

The mind must therefore be prepared before it be oppressed, and expect an evil day in order to weaken its influence. For no passion when wrought up to an excessive height will condescend to receive either what reason or what religion have to offer. And time only then must work that cure which reason and religion should have done: when a man cannot so properly be said to have exercised his patience as to have forgot the affliction.

As it will very much contribute to our patience, to expect our portion of the evil things of this life before they happen, so will it,

Secondly, to consider of what nature those evil things are which do happen.

As Providence doth frequently for wise and good reasons afflict us, so may we sometimes for no reason at all afflict ourselves. Many accidents befall us which have not that malignity in them which they appear to have. Many that have at first view the appearance of evil, upon further examination are found to be useful to us. And men, through a wrong apprehension, have often been impatient at an event, that hath proved to be the most prosperous that could happen to them.

It will, therefore, become every man, that would keep his temper even and undisturbed, to consider the nature of what he apprehends to be a calamity, and the circumstances with which it is attended, before he suffers himself to be transported by it; and see in what respect, and in what degree, it is really hurtful to him; as also whether, if in some respects it be hurtful, it may not in others be beneficial, and then also, whether the hurt or the service it is like to do us be the greater. He that is taken from a high station, may yet be less perplexed and more secure. He who is deprived of the means of charity and beneficence, is sure that God will accept of his will to have performed those duties if he had been able. What value we may seem to lose on account of any blemishes or defects that debase the outward form, we may restore and supply to ourselves by the exercise of those virtues which adorn the mind. And the loss even of those objects of our love who are most dear to us, is of this use, to excite us to the imitation of their excellent qualities: for what we love them, we do to resemble them. As the thoughts of leaving this world without reluctance, in order to be with them, without whom we cannot longer be easy or happy.

The circumstances also of the calamity that betid us must be considered by us. Is the loss yet so soon retrieved? Or is it not? If it be not; if we shall never be able to compass our fond wishes, but shall turn ourselves, *why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?* If it be, it is surely more likely to be so by the exercise of that reason, and judgment, and foresight, and industry, and dexterity, which the cool and calm alone can freely

use, than by that transport, that violence of passion which makes all these faculties useless to us, and so prevents the remedy we seek.

Again, is what we suffer a common, or an uncommon affliction? If the former, let us consider what a multitude of companions we have in our misfortunes; as also how little affected we were used to be with the calamities we now bewail, when it was the lot of others to endure them. If the latter, let us turn our eyes towards those whose wisdom and courage we have admired, and see with what firmness, and constancy, and pious resignation, they have endured as great or greater evils than we suffer, and from thence acknowledge, that it is as much below the dignity of human nature to sink under its afflictions, as it is necessary to its condition to feel them.

Again, many of our afflictions are brought upon us by our enemies, and many we create to ourselves. If we too much regret the calamities which are brought upon us by our enemies, we only make ourselves unhappy to assist them in their designs upon us, and to second that malice at which we repine. If we complain of the sorrows we create to ourselves, we are at once imprudent and unjust. And it would much better become us to make our former miscarriages the ground of our future discretion, and to regulate our unruly and corrupt affections, the true cause of our distress, than lament our distress, the known and confessed effect of them. Let us but regulate our desires, our self-love, our pride, and our envy, and all conditions will be easier to us.

For we do not perceive that in proportion to our desire of obtaining things innocent and warrantable, will be our uneasiness if we do not obtain them; and that if we overvalue what we possess, we shall be tormented with the fear of losing it, and with inconsolableness at the loss of it? And that in things criminal and immoral, the loss of estate, of health, of reputation, of virtue, attend our eager pursuits? And that in things innocent, our desires must be moderated, and in things criminal subdued, unless we will be every moment unhappy?

Do we not perceive that the immoderate love of ourselves is apt to represent our calamities greater than they are, and that from hence, either to move compassion or excuse impatience, we appeal to mankind for their consent and allowance that we suffer equally with others, is still greater when we, than when they suffer it? *Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.*

And again, is it not evident that our pride represents the afflictions that befall us as altogether undeserved? We first arrogate more merit to ourselves than we really have, and then are surprised and ruffled at every event that seems to derogate from it. From hence any misrepresentation of our character, or opposition to our measures, or disappointment in our aims, becomes insupportable to us. Want of deference to our judgments, or of submission to our power; contempt of our person, or neglect of our virtues, makes us peevish and fretful, weary of ourselves, and tasteless of every thing that should be agreeable to us in others.

And, lastly, do we not see how envy compares our own condition with that of our neighbours to our great disadvantage: how another's supposed prosperity afflicts us; how his health compared with our infirmities, his affluence with our poverty, his honour with our disgrace, makes us impatient in that state, which of itself is not intolerable? How reasonable this is will soon appear, if we consider that there are many whom we esteem extremely happy, and who seem not to come into misfortune like other men; who have yet many secret pressures, and perhaps greater than what we endure, which, however hid from us are sharply felt by themselves. So that sometimes we envy those whom we should pity, and because they have not a dark, gloomy, severe, dejected countenance, are apt to think that all is well, and that there is peace in that breast, when perhaps there is no peace.

But, thirdly, another method of becoming patient under afflictions is a virtuous and religious life.

Neither philosophy nor religion can raise our minds above the sense of pain or grief; and it is not of credit or service

to either, to attribute that to them which they do not effect; for it makes men rather doubt of their efficacy, even where they certainly operate very powerfully. Though, therefore, a life of holiness and virtue will not make us insensible of our afflictions, yet the consideration of having led such a life, will be so full of comfort, as in a great measure to lessen the weight and pressure of them. And we cannot be furnished with better materials to balance the crosses we shall meet with here, than the grateful reflections we shall have, upon the conquests we have gained over the sundry temptations that have assaulted us, and upon the many good deeds we have done.

Prudent economists lay up some portion of their worldly substance to support themselves under those evil accidents, which in common life may happen to them; and religious wisdom will prompt us to become rich in good works, that out of such valuable and delightful treasure, we may relieve our afflicted minds in time of need.

To have supported the weak, to have helped the friendless, to have rescued the oppressed, to have instructed the ignorant, to have converted a sinner, to have been any ways instrumental to the happiness and virtue of any of our fellow-christians, will be so many cordials to our drooping spirits in the day of our adversity; and will alleviate at least what they cannot perfectly cure.

Whereas if the mind is not at ease, every thing else will be uneasy to us. If we are not pleased with ourselves, we shall be dissatisfied with our condition. When a man shall fly for refuge to his own breast, and on seeing all his life past faithfully represented to him, can find no comfort there, all other comforts will be but fallacious and deceitful. The comforter that should receive his soul is far from him. His conscience is another affliction to him, and that the sorest. *A wounded spirit who can bear?*

The last method I shall mention of arriving at such a measure of patience under afflictions, as shall be accepted with God, is to supplicate him who only can give it, to endue us with it.

He who orders them, and that for our good, best knows when they shall have answered that end, and when it is proper we should be released from them. When therefore there shall be given us any of these *thorns in the flesh*, any of these *messengers of Satan to buffet us*, lest we should be exalted above measure, let us earnestly beseech him that they may depart from us, or at least that his grace may be sufficient for us, that if the embittered cup may not pass away from us except we drink it, his will may be done; that he would sanctify our afflictions to us, and make them produce that sincere repentance, those effectual resolutions of amendment, that exemplary constancy, and that just acknowledgment of his love towards us in thus dealing with us as sons, which he intended by them. Let us humbly intreat him, that the pains we feel may not any way move us to offend him, by murmuring at these his severe dispensations, or by despairing of his goodness in the return of the light of his countenance upon us.

And whilst we acknowledge our sufferings to be a just recompense of our evil deeds; let us beg of him to look upon them as a recompense with which he will be satisfied, that we may, through the mercy and merits of our Saviour, be exempt from any future punishment for them.

Lastly, let us particularly, and most earnestly beg of God, that in that extreme and difficult conflict which we must all one time have with the *last enemy that shall be destroyed*, when the *snare of death shall compass us round about*, and the *pains of hell get hold upon us*, he would so strengthen us in the inward man by the power of his might, as to make us more than conquerors through him that loveth us: that our souls being escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, may take their flight toward the blissful mansions above, and there mixing with that heavenly choir, may joyfully sing this rapturous and triumphant song, *The snare is broken, and we are delivered.*

S E R M O N LXXXVI.

On Integrity.

By DOCTOR NEWTON.

PROV. X. 9. Former part.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.

SELF-preservation is a principle universally implanted in human nature, and inseparably united to it. Our own safety and security, our own peace and prosperity, are what ingrosses all our attention. And without doubt, our all-wise and merciful Creator hath indued us with this solicitude and concern for ourselves and our welfare, on purpose that we should avoid what would hurt us, and pursue what would make us happy. Security from evil, therefore, is what we universally do, and must of necessity desire. But though the desire of security be an excellent first step towards the attainment of it, yet is there no small difficulty in being able to discern where safety is to be found, that we may fly unto it; and where it is that danger lies, that we may timely retire from it. Things do many times appear very different from what in fact they are; and a good deal of caution and circumspection are required that we be not mistaken in the notions we form of them. Sufficient cause there is to doubt, whether that be always to be pursued that invites; and to consider, whether that which is likely to affect us with pleasure this moment will not probably be attended with pain hereafter; and whether momentary satisfaction be not too light to be laid in the balance with lasting uneasiness. And here, I think, we ought with great thankfulness to acknowledge the goodness of God towards us, in that he hath not only implanted in the nature of man such a principle as must of necessity make him desire his own security and happiness, but hath moreover bestowed upon him the light of reason to discern wherein they consist, the power to distinguish between what is fit to be declined as hurtful, or embraced as beneficial to him, to the end that he might not err in his choice when good and evil should be set before him.

But still, though man be endued with

this excellent prerogative above all other creatures, that he can deliberate upon, compare and judge of what passes before him, view it in itself and in its consequences, and prefer one thing to another; yet it must be confessed he is also made subject to very strong passions, which either so cloud and obscure this noble light, that he cannot always clearly discern which of the two things he hath compared is fittest to be chosen by him, or which so overpower his will as to push him on to the choice of that which in his judgment he condemns, so that the bare reasonableness of doing or forbearing to do, is not always sufficient to determine him absolutely either one way or other.

Allowing this to be true, as indeed it is, and that what we would we often do not, and what we would not that we perversely do, there immediately appears the necessity of some standing rule of our actions for us to walk by, that if at any time the reason of things should seem to alter, according as frail men biassed by their passions might be disposed to think they did, they might have recourse to this steady, unvariable, positive rule, compare them with it, and by it conduct themselves safely in their moral ways. And therefore God Almighty, as a further instance of his beneficence to man, lest his passions, to which for wise purposes he is made liable, should either hinder him from consulting his reason or from obeying the dictates of it, hath moreover given him a positive rule to walk by, a written law for his guide. And that a due regard might be paid to this law, he hath annexed eternal rewards and punishments to the observance or neglect of it.

And again, lest what is future and at a distance should not so effectually work upon his hopes and fears, as what is nearer at hand and just before him, God hath also commissioned the civil magistrate to make other laws in aid of his own, and intrusted him with the power of the sword, to the end that such men, as have not the fear of God before their eyes, might be restrained from hurting themselves, and from obstructing their own happiness, by the fear of temporal punishment immediately to be inflicted on them.

And again, lest ignorant or perverse men, left to themselves, should misunderstand or pretend to misunderstand these laws, whether divine or human; and when they did not find it convenient to walk uprightly in conformity to them, should bend them to favour their own iniquity, and wrest them to their destruction; God hath appointed certain interpreters thereof, fallible men indeed, but in a particular manner bred to the knowledge of these laws, and under as strict obligations to explain them faithfully, as others are to obey them sincerely.

Behold the care which God hath taken of man! He hath implanted in him a desire of happiness, that he might endeavour after it. He hath endowed him with an acute discernment, that he might know whether what he desired was worthy his pursuit. He hath fenced him about with laws for his security, that he might not forfeit the blessings intended him, by making excursions from these bounds, to follow his own vagrant imaginations. He hath also annexed both temporal and eternal sanction to the violation or observance of these laws; that if by some passions he should be inclined to deviate from the paths of piety and virtue, he might by others be recalled into the right way, and that walking uprightly therein, according to the best knowledge he hath or can get, he might also walk securely.

Uprightness then is a conformity to these laws divine and human.

When I say, that uprightness is a conformity to human laws, I would be understood to mean such human laws as are reasonable, equitable, not against the law of nature, or the law of God. This sure is not unnecessarily premised: since unreasonable laws there have been, and I suppose, still are in all countries, to which men may be tempted to conform for fear of punishment; at the same time that they may think themselves obliged not to conform in point of conscience. Against such as these the prophet Esaias crieth out, *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil.* And again, *Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees.* And Tully hath occasionally thought it proper to say, that nothing can be more

foolish than to think that every thing is just that is contained in human institutes; since these are often obtained by force or fraud, to effectuate the private schemes of men in power, without any regard to public utility. How many of our own statutes have been mended, which shewed they were imperfect, and how many repealed, which supposes they were inconvenient? and it would be to flatter the Legislature to say, there were none that are bad still remaining unrepealed. I do not then mean that uprightness consists in a conformity to such human laws as these, but in a conformity to such as are reasonable, equitable, not against the law of nature, or the law of God; and even to such as of which we do not see the reason, if therein we see no unreasonableness, iniquity or contrariety to the law of nature or law of God.

Uprightness, then, is a conformity to the divine and human laws; and I shall endeavour to shew that in this moral and legal rectitude consists our security,

1. From shame.
2. From remorse of conscience.
3. From punishment temporal and eternal.

First, In the observance of the laws of God and of our country, consists our security from shame. Men naturally desire to be thought well of in general; and there are particular persons, whom we so love or revere, that we would not forfeit their good opinion of us for any thing this world contains; and others, perhaps, so ill affected to us, that we should be loath to give them occasion to triumph over our weakness; or the pleasure to rejoice at our disgrace.

Reputation is as dear to some men as their lives. Some have not been able to outlive the loss of it. Others have thought no hazards, no labours, no austerities, too great to retrieve it. That men put a very great value upon it, there needs no other proof, than that whoever goes about to lessen it, must do it at his peril. A hurt of this kind will not fail to raise some resentment in the breast of every sufferer. If unmerited, those who have little restraint upon them from any religious considerations, will be sure, as they see occasion, to retaliate the wrong

hath been done them: and if denied, the instrument of so painful a sensation will have derived upon himself an enmity to his person, and a vigilance to find him faulty; and perhaps a misrepresentation of him, if innocent. And indeed a good character is of that importance, that not to value it very highly, is to be profligate. And those who pretend not to care what others say of them, are mistaken, if they are serious men. For it is the power of doing good, and of inestimable price. The hopes of it incite to what is laudable, and the attainment of it makes us careful to preserve it, and studious to improve it.

Now shame is the sense of a loss of reputation, of our having done something which we should not have done, and for having done which, men will have a bad opinion of us. And what surer course can we take to avoid this uneasiness of the mind, than by being strict observers of the laws of God and of our country?

With regard to the laws of God, to moral laws, there is a dignity and gracefulness in virtue. To be superior to a temptation, is greatness, as well as goodness. To subdue inordinate affections, and to bring into captivity every irregular thought to the obedience of the law of God, is a victory that shews more conduct and courage, and ought to be matter of greater triumph, than to conquer armies. In vice there is a meanness, a reproach to our reason, a reflection upon our discretion, an impeachment of that patience, and fortitude, and steady resolution, by which great and good men abstain from whatever is misbecoming or unworthy of them, or will be shameful to them. That vicious men do themselves think vice to be shameful, is evident, in that they choose to practise it secretly; and if they are discovered, yet, to avoid as much of shame as they can, find it necessary to extenuate their faults; and sometimes to prevent discovery, and the shame consequent upon it, are guilty of the greatest crimes that can be committed; and through impatience of other's consciousness of their folly, are sometimes tempted to wish the witnesses of it out of the world, even though

there be no apprehension they will divulge it. They are in pain in the company of sober men, having a misgiving of heart that others know what they know amiss of themselves; the true reason of seeking a refuge, and finding a pleasure, in the conversation of those, of whom they know as much ill as they know of themselves. Mutual guilt fears no imputation, it not only doth not accuse, but excuses, and even justifies by such sort of reasonings, as to the parties concerned appear plausible, and of which it is their interest and their comfort not to see the error. Why should one have a great deal, and another nothing, is to them a sufficient argument for the invading the property of any man; forgetting that their own idleness, and lewdness, and intemperance, are the cause that they have no property of their own, or that others are backward to give them what they foresee will not better their condition. There are men, it is said, who boast themselves of their wickedness, and, in their own representation of their immoral achievements, make themselves a great deal worse than they are, from whence it should seem as if they thought not infamy, but reputation belonged to their evil deeds. But in this there may be a mistake. The praise they solicit is not to the evil deed, but to the dexterity and address, to the activity and dispatch, to the intrepidity and presence of mind, with which it is committed. For all these qualities, when applied to laudable purposes, are really laudable. But no man sure can think that wickedness is an honour to him. The utmost that can be said is, that modesty, by degrees, may be impaired. That from an impatience of reproach, they may resolve not to be affected with it. And, after having done violence to themselves in suppressing the sense and feeling of it, may appear as unconcerned for their immoral behaviour as if they were innocent. This, however, hinders not, but that there will for ever be a great deal of difference between the impudence of a prostitute, and the confidence of a clear conscience.

Let us see, in the next place, whether the violation of human laws, reasonable and equitable, be not also matter of shame to every serious man who wishes

the peace of societies, or makes a conscience of his duty to God.

That the law-makers do themselves often break the laws; that there is a general remissness in the execution of them; that some in power like it better that men should rather be obnoxious to the laws than punished by them; that numbers are equally guilty of the same violations; and that some will argue, what is not evil in itself may be innocently done, though forbidden by human laws, the penalty being submitted to upon discovery; are considerations that may lessen the terror of breaking human laws, but not the shame, or at least not the shamefulness.

But, besides that the laws of men are to be obeyed for the sake of God, is there no shame in breaking that law which one hath first agreed and consented should be made a law? Is it not better for one's country that its laws should be strictly observed, than that they should not? And is there no shame in having so little regard to the welfare of one's country, as to break the laws of it one's self, and to shew others the way to do so too? On the other hand, is there no dignity in doing that which is right, if, for no other reason but for this, because it is right? Is there no greater dignity in doing that which is right, the fewer there be that do it? Is there not still greater dignity in doing that which is right, the more one may do that which is wrong with impunity? Besides, is there no shame in being discovered? Doth not that term suppose one is found doing what one should not do? Doth it not also suppose one is doing it in a covert way, and in a clandestine manner? And is it worthy a man of honour and virtue to do any thing which he is afraid should be known; that he should blush to be surprised in, that he should be troubled to hear of? If it be not right, why does he attempt it? If it be right, why is he afraid to appear in it? Does not the being surprised in a thing one should not do, confound a man that hath any modesty? Does he know which way to look or what to say?

There are some, indeed, who, sensible enough of shame, in departing from certain frivolous rules of honour of their

own making, live in the utter contempt of the laws of God and man shameless; and not only so, but arrogate also a sort of reputation to their immoral and unlawful actions, and often make themselves a great deal worse than they are, purely for the magnanimity they think there is in being above restraint. But let them not be mistaken. Shame doth not less attend them, because they have learnt to glory in it. The end and design of laws is to curb the vicious and irregular appetites of men. And where is the reputation of owning they are so much more vicious and irregular than other people, that the laws themselves are not able to restrain them?

With regard to many laws purely political, there are also multitudes who professedly live, and allow themselves in the breach of them. Conceiving, perhaps, that what is not evil in itself is therefore innocent; that their numbers will keep them in countenance, and protect them from shame; and that there can be no great harm in the violation of these laws, so long as they are ready to submit to the penalty of them, if they be discovered.

And however ready they may be to submit to the penalty of the laws they violate, yet is there no shame in penalty? Have rewards and penalties lost their nature, or if praise attends the one, doth not disgrace adhere to the other?

There is, therefore, no security from shame but in uprightness, but in a strict conformity to the divine and human laws. The hypocrite well knows the value of this virtue, and how much it concerns his worldly interest that men should have a good opinion of his integrity. And therefore, though he is not upright, yet he pretends to be so. But as this in him is dissimulation, and not virtue, so the event is generally the same to him and to other wicked men. He cannot always be upon his guard. There are times when the exact observer will see through, or at least have reason to suspect, that artful behaviour, by which he would steal away the reputation which only belongs to upright men. And the world is generally so ill-natured, that whomever they suspect, they defame.

But what disgrace can ever attend the

man who does his duty? Who, considering his own imbecility, thinks it a privilege to be under the restraint of wholesome rules, and his greatest honour to obey them? Wrapped in his own virtue, envy and malice cannot hurt him. The love and esteem of all good men are engaged to protect and defend him.

But were it possible for men to wear this disguise without suspicion, and to sin so privately that they should not be found out, and that shame should not always be the consequence of evil deeds; yet let them not hereby think themselves secure so long as they shall be subject,

2. To remorse of conscience.

Peace of mind is the greatest blessing man can have, and that alone which gives a relish to all other enjoyments. This is what we aim at in all our pursuits, and if we can be so happy as to arrive at it, is an ample recompense of all our labours. Neither riches, nor honours, nor preferments, nor popular applause, nor great men's favour can bestow it. The only source from whence it springs is a man's own breast, which, kept clean and unpolluted, will be an inexhaustible fountain of the most refreshing waters. Nothing but uprightness can secure to us this peace of mind, this lovely tranquillity. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* For every man, who is conscious to himself of evil deeds, carries about with him his own accuser, his own tormentor: before he has committed the premeditated crime, his thoughts are so taken up with the prospect of some present pleasure or advantage resulting from it, that he sees not the dreadful consequences that will attend it; but, after the evil action is once done, and cannot, if he would, give ten thousand worlds, be undone: when the guilt that seemed little before it was incurred, is now enhanced, and the satisfaction or benefit that was before proposed, is now diminished: then it is, that innumerable uneasy thoughts are apt to crowd upon him in a tumultuous manner; then it is, that he feels the insupportable pain and anguish of a wounded spirit. What refuge does he hope for in retirement, whilst the fatal arrow sticks

fast in his side, and the mind is at leisure to lay before him a faithful representation of what he dreads to behold? And when, for ease, he would change his solitude for society; then it is, that, in the midst of his amusements and diversions, the remembrance of guilt obtrudes itself upon him, and damps the jollity of all his entertainments. Then it is, that he must be forced to hear the like crimes he is guilty of condemned in others, and apply the same censures to himself which are due to them, with an aching heart. What sort of security is this, to walk dishonestly in by-paths and crooked ways unseen of men, if we ourselves disapprove the irregular steps we take, and for ever lament, that we would retreat, and cannot? What avails it any man to have hid his theft, his murder, his adultery, his perjury from men? The all-seeing eye hath discovered him, and the Almighty, with a stretched out arm, pursues him.

But it may be, there are some so accustomed to do evil, of so lost a reputation, and of so scared a conscience, that they are insensible of shame, incapable of remorse; and who, if these were all the dismal consequences of doing evil, find no discouragement from hence. If the violations of the laws of God and man were attended with no other dangers than infamy and after-reflections full of horror, they are as secure from any apprehensions of these as uprightness itself can make them. But God be thanked, these shameless, hardened wretches are still of the same weak frame and make with other men; are all as sensible of external pain, fear punishment, and fear death as all the other men; and the less they believe of another world, the more unfeeling they are to be hurried out of this: which brings me to observe,

3. That their fancied security in the two former respects, will but more effectually expose them to those dangers which they do, and must fear, and from which the upright man alone can possibly be secure, viz. of temporal and eternal punishment. The prospect of some present pleasure or profit is the great temptation to wicked men to sin, which would be of little consideration to them, if they were thoroughly acquainted with virtue,

whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace; and which, as it is, would hardly be a temptation great enough to overcome them, if they were not buoyed up with the hopes of impunity.

But let not the wicked man flatter himself that he shall go unpunished, either in this world, or in the world to come. His designs may be deeply laid; his schemes may be cunningly contrived; his outward behaviour may be so plausible as not to be suspected: he may have succeeded in his dark practices so often without discovery, as to be confirmed in his opinion, *that he shall never be found out*; he may have blamed the misconduct of others who have miscarried in their wicked enterprizes, and fancy that he himself, in the same cases, could have used greater dexterity, and that, however, they were taken in the crafty wiliness that they had imagined, yet he could have escaped.

But, after all, he cannot be more wary to attempt a villainy, than others will be watchful to discover him. The laws were made for the security of the community, and the breaker of them is a common enemy. To hurt one man, is to alarm the neighbourhood; and every man that regards his own safety, will in this respect be concerned for that of others; and will think it his interest to pursue the invader of it, and bring him to justice, both that he may be freed from any future apprehension of injuries from him, and that others, being terrified by the example of his punishment, may be afraid to offend.

It is very rare that any notable crime hath escaped being brought to light; and the numbers yearly convicted and condemned to the punishments they deserved, might convince any man, that was not too fond of his own parts, that running the same hazards, he would not be likely to be more fortunate. No man that does evil is ever secure, however secret. He may look about to see who seeth, but he is not sure he is not seen. If the darkness of the night invite, the silence of it often betrays. If the villain goes alone, there is usually a misgiving of heart and fearfulness to attempt; there is usually a slowness to dispatch what was intended.

and a disorder in his own scheme, and an invitation of resistance, all which tend to discovery. In the confidence of an accomplice, there is no better security. What his fidelity would hide, his inadvertence may disclose. What the present friendship conceals, future disagreements may lay open. Who is safe from the weakness, or folly, or passion of a frail criminal? What wicked man is above the temptation that may be offered for a wanted discovery? What taciturnity is to be expected in the decay of parts, or loss of senses, which in the course of life may happen to any man? What sagacity can foresee all the questions that may be put to suspected persons? or be able to evade the force of them, or to contrive a defence so connected, so uniform, so agreeing in all its parts, as that the audience shall not fail to pity the falsely accused, and retire under a full persuasion of their innocence? Or what if a wicked partner should repent, and not being able to make restitution for the wrongs he hath done, should, under the terrors of his conscience, think himself obliged, in his last moments, when he is launching out into eternity, to confess his crimes, and tearing no other reproach like that of his own heart, to declare who it was that betrayed him into them, or assisted him in them?

But if men of this bad character are usually so hardened that nothing of this needeth to be feared (though this in fact hath often happened,) yet who is always so wary and circumspect in doing ill, and after he hath done it, that he can be sure he shall not betray himself? There is a hurry and confusion that attends guilt, in the midst of which those very things are often done to cover, which effectually expose the wicked person. God Almighty will infatuate him, that he may destroy himself. *He is afraid where no fear is; he fleeth when no man pursueth*; and, as it were offers himself up to the punishment he seeks to escape.

But alas! what are temporal punishments compared with eternal! If those are to be dreaded because they are more immediate; these are justly terrible, in that they are more exquisite and more lasting. Therefore let not the heart of man be set on him to do evil because ser-

tence is not executed speedily against him. Nor let him flatter himself that this is at so great a distance. How short is the longest life compared with eternity ! It is even as nothing. At best it is but a span long ; and God Almighty, incensed at the disobedience of men, may be provoked to cut it shorter than they are aware of. When a man is descending to the grave, and must enter into an eternal state of happiness or misery, according as he hath obeyed or disobeyed the laws of his Maker, what are all the pleasures of sin which he hath enjoyed for a season ? What security is it to him to have been able to evade the examinations of an earthly magistrate, and to have escaped the punishment assigned to the breach of human laws ? The damnation that he hath been so often warned of, and which seemed at a distance, now lingereth not, and the just vengeance of God is ready to overtake him. In vain doth he call to the hills to hide him, and to the rocks to cover him, for all things are naked and opened to the all seeing eyes of the supreme Judge with whom he now hath to do. Nor hath there been any thing heretofore so secret, which shall not now be made manifest. Now the upright and the wicked shall hear their respective dooms pronounced : *Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you. Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*

I hope, by the above reflections it hath appeared, that there is no security from shame, or remorse of conscience, or present or future punishment, but in uprightness, or a conduct agreeable to the laws of God and of our country. But before I conclude this discourse, I beg leave to observe, that as there is an uprightness, required in keeping, so there is in explaining, these laws ; and that security in all the fore-mentioned respects will belong, as to the upright observer only, so only, to the upright interpreter of them.

The gross of mankind can neither be their own counsellors in matters of human law without prejudice to their temporal interests ; nor their own casuists in matters of divine law without hazard to their spiritual ; nor at any time competent judges in their own case.

Hence arises a necessity that some men should apply themselves in a particular manner to the study of these laws, and to get therein such knowledge as may enable them to advise those who shall consult them, what may be done with safety in points of law or conscience.

To invite applications to them for their advice, they profess themselves ready and able to give it. The higher are their stations, and the greater their reputation for skill in their several professions, the greater is the authority and influence of their opinions and doctrines.

If they mislead, how many do they mislead ? And if those who are misled are men of power, how fatal, how extensive may be the mischief of the error ?

Histories will sufficiently inform us, that illegalities warranted to be law, and indefensible tenets pressed upon the conscience for gospel, by their respective great professors, have subverted kingdoms.

But what could be a sufficient motive ? Naturally, if there be no bias upon the mind, men choose to say that which they really think, and it is with reluctance that they ever bring themselves to say otherwise. No other motive hath appeared, than to gratify the mean appetite, which they could not forego, to a greater fortune, or a higher station, by pleasing men, who could enrich them, and advance them.

But do they seek to please men ? If they yet seek to please men, they will not be the servants of Christ.

And if in these cases they cannot be said to walk uprightly, neither will they be found to walk securely. Their high character will not screen them from reproach, but rather expose them to it. Or if others should acquit them, they would yet condemn themselves. Moreover it is required both of the dispensers of the laws of the realm, and of the stewards of the mysteries of God, that men be found faithful ; and, if they be not, *He that is higher than the highest, regardeth ; and there be higher than they.*

Away, then, with all these temptations, which do so easily beset unsteady, covetous and ambitious men. Away with this childish fondness for outward pomp and

splendour, for corruptible riches, for deceitful favour. Our education here, and our experience every where, will teach us the emptiness and vanity of these trifles. To a man who daily considers his mortality, and that he is going to *the land where all things are forgotten*, what are the greatest earthly advantages which the greatest prince hath to bestow, compared with the satisfaction of his own conscience here, and *the glory which shall be revealed in him hereafter*? Then, *let not our heart reproach us so long as we live*. Let us keep our integrity, though we die. Uprightness is the greatest ornament of the greatest men of all professions. It conciliates trust and confidence, affection and friendship; for it is the greatest security can be given to men, that we will not injure them, nor deceive them. There is no fortune so low, nor aspect so mean, to which it doth not add a value and a beauty. The person adorned with it may possess his superiority without envy, and his frailty without censure. It disarms the malevolent of his malice, and the punished of his resentment. It gives a serenity in solitude, a cheerfulness in society, a pleasure in devotion, a consolation in misery, and, at the approach of death, hopes full of immortality.

S E R M O N LXXXVII.

By Archbishop SECKER.

The Duties of the Rich and Great.

1 TIM. vi. 17, 18.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

EVERY condition of life hath its peculiar dangers to be avoided, and duties to be done, but none hath dangers more threatening, or duties more important, than that of the rich and great: whose situation, notwithstanding, is seldom considered by those who are in it, as having any thing to be feared: and is generally imagined by others, to comprehend almost

every thing that is to be wished. Now the mistakes even of the lower part of the world concerning this matter are attended with some exceeding bad consequences; disposing them very unreasonably to envy their superiors, and be uneasy at their own lot. But the mistakes of the rich and great themselves concerning the advantages and obligations of their station, produce the most fatal effects that can be, on themselves and all around them. And it greatly adds to the unhappiness of their case, that whilst they have many things to divert their attention from what is right, and prompt them to what is wrong; to make the gratifying of their bad inclinations easy, and support them in the world, let them act as they will; they have commonly scarce any one to remind them, if they act amiss. Intimations of misbehaviour, however prudently given, are to most persons disagreeable; but to persons of rank they appear disrespectful too. And such of them, as will bear to be told of their managing their healths or their fortunes ill, shew a great reluctance to let their conduct, in point of religion or morals, be touched with any seriousness. So that, just where they need admonition most, they have the least given them. It is but few, that can with propriety use freedom enough with them, to do any good; for, to slight and distant hints they think no serious regard is due. And amongst those that can, there are fewer yet that will undertake an office, in which they have little prospect either of success or thanks. Indeed the generality of those that come about them, in all likelihood, mean nothing, but their own interest, or their own amusement; and these, they may be sure, will take care never to offend them by giving them good advice: but there is much cause to suspect, what the great, notwithstanding seldom do suspect, that they will often court them by giving them bad; or, if they do not directly persuade them into sin, (which might sometimes be too gross behaviour), will however more covertly dispose them to it; encourage and countenance them in it; either to bring about some particular end, which they have to serve by it, or with a general view of making themselves agreeable.

To be thus environed with temptations,

and probably sensible of none of them, is a most pitiable condition. And yet the rich and great, when they are led wrong, do not so deserve compassion, as not to deserve much blame too. For as there are some things to excuse their faults, there are many that aggravate them. Their education, so costly and laboured in several respects, must have been conducted with the absurdest negligence in the most material; if it hath not given them a much superior knowledge of their duty, to that which common persons can usually acquire. Their disengagement afterwards from cares, that others are swallowed up in, affords them peculiar leisure for thought and recollection; and the vast and evident importance of their whole behaviour, on such a multitude of accounts, one should think could not fail of engaging their attention to every step they take. So that if they have fewer occasional admonitions given them; it might be hoped they would have less need of them; for their very situation admonishes them constantly, that they are raised by Providence above others, in order to be authors and examples of good, not evil, to their fellow-creatures. This is directly their business and trust; it is the noblest and happiest that can be. The labours of it are softened by many honorable and pleasing distinctions, which God hath bestowed on them; for which he will justly expect they shall make him a return. If it be such as it ought, they will be eminent for ever in the next world, as well as for a few days in this; and how can persons be excusable, that are uninfluenced by such considerations?

It is very true, our Saviour doth express, in very strong terms, the difficulty of a rich man's entering into the kingdom of heaven. But he means, of such a one's professing himself a subject of Christ; which required uncommon resolution at that time, when all worldly advantages were to be given up, and the bitterest persecutions undergone for the sake of the gospel. Yet even then no man was excused, either from embracing or practising Christianity; much less now. And if at all times the great have temptations beyond others, they have also reasons beyond others for struggling with them, and will be rewarded beyond others for overcoming them. Therefore St. Paul in the text gives

them no dispensations, but only provides for them stronger warnings; and instead of authorising the ministers of God's word to wink at their faults, requires that they admonish them with singular earnestness to perform their duties. The only prerogative in relation to this matter that can be allowed them. But as in general the least offensive, and therefore most efficacious way of admonishing, is by public instruction, we usually confine ourselves to that; and the upper part of mankind ought to attend upon it more constantly, and hearken to it more seriously, in proportion as they are less likely to be told their faults and their dangers, in private, to good purpose; and should *suffer the word of exhortation* (Heb. xiii. 22.) to be given with greater plainness and freedom to them all in common, the greater objections there are against taking any considerable liberties with each of them singly.

And as those of middle rank, may yet, when compared with their inferiors, be considered as highly exalted, and accordingly consider themselves as such. All degrees above the lowest, are concerned to cherish the Apostle's charge; and the very lowest will find their own failures, and their own obligations intermixed of course with what will be said about those of their betters.

Now the peculiar dangers of the rich and great (for though the Apostle names only the former, the connexion is so close, that he may well be understood to mean both) arises either from the eminence of their station, or the abundance of their wealth; and therefore the text points a caution against each. But I shall be able at present to treat only of the first; which is, *that they be not high-minded*.

Every superiority, of every sort, which men only imagine themselves possessed of, is too liable both to be over-rated and improperly used. But superior fortune and condition are advantages so visible to all eyes, create such dependencies, and give such influence, that it is no wonder, if they tempt to uncommon haughtiness. Even such as rise to them by accident, are so eager to have all the world acknowledge them to be what they are just become, that they often quite forget what they were a while before. Such as acquire them by their own application and abili-

ties, hardly ever fail to think very highly of themselves on that account. And they who are born to them, usually set out from the first with despising those beneath them: as indeed to be descended from ancestors of note; to bear a name which others have been accustomed to respect; to enjoy perhaps hereditary honours, and on every occasion to be addressed in other language, than is used to the vulgar sort of men; these things are enough to over-set the minds of the weak; and they have some degree of wrong effect upon most; more, perhaps, than they themselves are sensible of.

Now undoubtedly distinguished rank is entitled to distinguished regard: and the good order of society very much depends on keeping up that regard; and therefore the great should in a proper manner be much more careful to keep it up, than many of them are. For indeed their condescensions and familiarities, are often with such very wrong persons, and in such very wrong ways, that preserving an over-distant behaviour would, of the two, be much the better, both for themselves, and those whom they are pleased to honour with their intimacy. But when they nurse up the consciousness of their own superiority into a contemptuous neglect of others, and insolent expectations of unflinching submissions from them; they have great need to be reminded, that respect is paid to wealth and birth, because the common good requires it, not because the persons who receive it, are always worthy of it: and when they are unworthy, they have much more reason to be humble on their own account, than vain on account of their estates or their ancestors. The wise and good indeed will shew them the outward regard, to which they are entitled; but inward they must expect from none, except the weak and inconsiderate: nor will the false appearances of it from the artful and interested do them any service: but their dishonourable behaviour will be the more conspicuous for their honourable station.

And even supposing them guilty of nothing else to lessen the esteem they claim; yet claiming too much of it, or too openly, will frustrate their intention most effectually. For neither equals nor inferiors will suffer near so much to be extorted

from them, as they would have bestowed most freely of their own accord. Haughtiness therefore towards all, who are not absolute dependants, is a most ridiculous thing; and to such as are, it is a very imprudent one. For the highest lie greatly at the mercy even of those who serve them, and attend upon them; in respect of their characters, their credit and weight in the world, their fortunes, their ease, their very safety. And therefore to treat those, who are ever so much at our command, with such humanity and affability, as may secure their good opinion and good will, is mere common honest policy.

But one sort of condescension to inferiors may be of peculiar advantage; I mean, listening to useful information and advice from them: things, which the great are apt to think themselves above, when every one else sees they have much need of them. *The rich man*, as Solomon observes, *is wise in his own conceit: but the poor, that hath understanding, searcheth him out.* (Prov. xxviii. 11.) Neither affluence, nor high rank, by any means imply superiority of judgement; or if they do, the best judgements often want to be instructed in the nature and circumstances of what they are to judge upon; and indeed to be guarded against the mistakes, to which inexperience, inadvertence, or even prejudices, may expose them. And the more important any matter is, and the less carefully and seriously we have weighed it, the more necessary there evidently appears, that we should hear others in relation to it. How attentive then should the greatest hear the appointed teachers of religion: the *one thing needful* (Luke, x. 42.) to their eternal happiness; and perhaps the very thing that many of them have hitherto considered the least, yet possibly set themselves the most to despise and ridicule! But in their worldly affairs too, it might prevent innumerable errors and distresses, if they would vouchsafe on fit occasions, to receive and encourage lessons of wisdom from those beneath them. This, you will easily discern, is a very different matter from being led and governed: to which the most self-sufficient of men, under artful management, are often the most subject. It is governing ourselves by exerting the rational powers, which God hath given us, instead of being slaves to our passions and

fancies. We cannot alter truth : and therefore, how exalted soever our condition be, we should think it no disgrace, but the highest honour, to submit to it. Nor is the obligation of doing so in the least different, whether we discover it ourselves, or learn it from others. If reason hath at all a right to direct us, it hath an equal right, whence soever it comes. And the most truly considerable persons have always been the readiest to follow the opinion of such, as were in all respects their inferiors, whenever they happened to be in the right. Nor is there perhaps any part of humility, that can give us more reputation than this, or do us more service.

But if humility in the great could be no other way beneficial to them ; yet avoiding the guilt of so injurious a behaviour, as indulging a proud spirit prompts them to, is surely a motive important enough. Hence it is that instead of *learning* forgiveness of him, who was *meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. xi. 29.), they often resent offences of very small consequence, nay undesigned ones, very immoderately ; and some, even to the demanding of the blood of others at the hazard of their own. And though perhaps they themselves began the injury, yet they imagine their honour binds them to violate the laws of God and man in order to revenge it : which absurd notion they have patronized in the world, till persons, so far beneath them, have taken it up, that one should hope they might be induced to lay it down for that reason, if not for better. But the haughtiness of the great, without being combined with anger, doth in cold blood infinite mischief. And they should consider, that it is the same aggravation of the fault, if one who is justly possessed of superiority already, unjustly affects more ; as it would be in the rich to pilfer and rob. In countries of legal liberty indeed, there is not so much room, for the pride of the upper part of the world to bear upon the lower. And truly both may thank God for it : the one, that they are thus delivered from the temptation ; the other, from the suffering. For very dreadful is both the wickedness and the misery, to which unlimited power leads : and Solomon describes the latter very pathetically : *I returned and considered all the oppressions, that are done under*

the sun : and behold, the fears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter : and on the side of their oppressors was power ; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead, that are already dead, more than the living, which are yet alive. Yea, better is he, than both they, which hath not yet been ; and hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. (Eccl. iv. 1, 2, 3.) But though a merciful Providence hath preserved this nation, freer than any other, from such extremities ; yet every where the rich and great make their inferiors suffer a great deal too much : sometimes by a designed and studied haughtiness, often by a careless and contemptuous one, which renders them inattentive to what those in lower life may feel ; when perhaps from principle, such as it is, they would avoid doing injuries to their equals, and are by no means without tenderness towards them.

Thus too many treat their tenants hardly, or permit them to be so treated : sometimes indeed from avarice ; sometimes from the urgency of wants which follies and vices have created ; but frequently, from not thinking it worth while to inquire, whether such mean creatures are well or ill used, and refusing to be troubled with their complaints and remonstrances ; which, though often groundless, may often likewise be very just. Now were we in this wretched case, we should soon discern it to be extremely cruel in our superiors, to imagine us undeserving of being regarded and eased in bad times, or under the pressure of unexpected accidents ; to indulge their own love of money, or keep up their idle expensiveness to the full, whatever we and our families might undergo, whose labour must pay for all ; to throw new burthens upon us, not because we were able to bear them, but because they were unwilling ; to subject us, without redress, to the partialities and resentment of their agents, or crush us under the weight of their own ; obliging us perhaps to seek a livelihood elsewhere to our certain loss and probable ruin, if at any time we were less obsequious to them than they required, though on occasions where we ought to be left free. Such behaviour all men would think exceedingly barbarous,

were they to experience it; and therefore all should resolve never to be guilty of it, and apply to this case amongst others, that admirable exhortation of the Son of Sirach: *make not an hungry soul sorrowful; neither provoke a man in his distress: reject not the supplication of the afflicted, neither turn thy face away from a poor man. Turn not away thy eye from the needy, and give him no occasion to curse thee. For if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayer shall be heard of him that made him.—Let it not grieve thee to bow down thine ear to the poor; and give him a friendly answer, with meekness.* (Ecclus. iv. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8.)

Another sort of persons, for whom superiors too commonly will not vouchsafe to have the consideration that they ought, are those who come to them upon business. Obliging such to an unreasonable attendance, making them wait long, and it may be return often, (when perhaps only idleness, or caprice, or occupations that might well be interrupted, prevent their being dispatched immediately,) is a very provoking and a very injurious kind of stateliness. Time ought to be precious to all men; and is peculiarly precious to those, who have affairs and appointments to fill it with, that either must be attended on, each in its season, or they and theirs must suffer, perhaps be undone. And were it considered, but near so much as it ought, how very large a share of the time of others, a few of these proud or thoughtless men are sufficient to consume, it would be found a matter of no small seriousness.

But there is another fault still worse frequently joined with this; deeming it beneath their notice, whether such of their inferiors, as have just and reasonable demands upon them, are paid when they ought. At the same time they would think it infamous not to pay, what they lose to the vilest wretch in the pernicious practice of gaming, though the law, for the public good, discourages and almost forbids their doing it. Notwithstanding which, by a monstrous perversion of language, they call these last their debts of honour, in opposition to the former. It is very true that a wretch is not at all akin to pride, frequently reduce those of high rank to neglect of their duties, and satisfying their cre-

ditors. But so far as they take liberties in this respect, which, were they less considerable in the world, they would not dare to take, and probably would not think of taking; so far their injustice arises from a haughty confidence in their own greatness; and a contemptuous indifference, to what inconveniences and difficulties they expose others. There needs but a little consideration to see, what exquisite distresses such a conduct must produce; and how pitiable the situation of those poor people must be; who, on pain of losing all their business, dare not refuse credit; and yet are in a likely way to be ruined if they give it. The common method of saving themselves, I fear, is, by making unreasonable gains from the good part of their customers, to indemnify themselves for the delays, and often final disappointments, which they meet with from the bad. But this is plainly punishing such as use them well, for the faults of others who use them ill: a behaviour of which no one should be guilty, and therefore no one should be driven to it; but least of all by those, whose circumstances either do or might exempt them the most entirely from any necessity of such injustice. The care of being punctual in the discharge of their debts, and considerate, for that purpose, in comparing their income and expences, and attentive to keep the latter within the compass of the former, far from being below the greatest, enables them to shew themselves truly great on many occasions, when otherwise they could not: but the figure which they make in the eyes of mankind, amidst all their splendor, for the want of this care; and the poor arts, to which they are obliged to condescend, for quieting their creditors, and supporting their extravagances, are extremely unsuitable to a station, that claims distinguished respect.

Another, very blameable, and very pernicious instance of high-mindedness in the great, is, imagining the management of their families an attention too low for them. Even that of their children they very commonly despise to an astonishing degree. And yet think it no dishonour, to throw away on every trifle and folly, that they can hunt out, many of those hours, a few of which might do a great deal towards making life a blessing, (which

now through their fault is often a curse), to those whom they have brought into it. Or if they have humility enough to inspect some part of their education, it is usually the outward and shewy, but least material part: and they would be ashamed of the supposition of their taking any serious pains, to plant in them those principles of religion and virtue, on learning which the present and future happiness of their children depends; and their own, on teaching them. If persons can treat the very *fruit of their body* (Mich. vi. 7.) in such a manner, no wonder if the servants under their roof are treated amiss. And yet a tender regard to the meanest of them is unquestionably the duty of the highest of those who employ them. For our common humanity requires, that their disadvantageous condition be not rendered more so than it needs, either by design or negligence, of which nature hath given them as strong a feeling as their betters. And therefore, of our own accord, we should inquire and consider about them: when they offer complaints, we should receive them; and if there be some impropriety in the manner of making them, pass over that, as proceeding perhaps from ignorance, perhaps from a present sense of suffering; look to the substance of what they allege, and grant them due redress. Again, when they seem to be in a fault, we should submit to hear patiently, and examine equitably, every plea they have to make. For there may be circumstances of no small weight in their favour, both as to what they remonstrate about, and what they are accused of, which we may not have rightly understood or considered; and therefore should permit them to be laid before us. Otherwise we treat them as unworthy of common justice, and incur that guilt, which Job hath expressed in such affecting words that they can never be omitted, when this subject is mentioned. *If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what shall I do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me, make him: and did not one fashion us in the womb?* (Job, xxxi. 13, 14, 15.)

I am very sensible, that entering in person too minutely into the particulars of

every small domestic concern, may sit ill upon people of rank; and perhaps be inconsistent with their attention to affairs of more importance. But so far as they can with any propriety look into things, they should be careful, not only to behave mildly and equitably to their servants themselves, but to see that they behave so one to another. For in large families especially, there are sometimes dreadful grievances of this kind: and requisite subordination may be sufficiently preserved, without either countenancing or permitting oppression.

Not that under colour of gentleness to them, we should suffer them to live uncontrolled, and to do as they please. This would be a false good-nature, and extensively pernicious. We may think perhaps, that we shall hurt nobody by it, but ourselves; and even this we ought not to do. But indeed, along with ourselves, we shall hurt the fortunes, it may be the morals too, of those who ought to be dearest to us; for wicked servants are dangerous corrupters: we shall set an example of ill management in our own families, which will make it more difficult for others to manage theirs well: and we shall do the greatest prejudice of all to those, who will probably at present the least complain of it; I mean the poor wretches, whom we indulge so wrongly. For it is hardly to be hoped, but that our negligence about their conduct, will tempt them, either to be dishonest, or idle, or wasteful, in our service; or vicious and dissolute; or however, forgetful of their duty to God. And we owe it to them, as we have taken them under our care, to preserve them, if we can, from all these sins; to direct their steps in the ways of religion and virtue; and not expose them to ruin here, and misery hereafter, for want of vouchsafing to look a little after them: a shocking instance of haughtiness in relation to *our brethren for whom Christ died*. (1 Cor. viii. 11.)

I have enlarged so long on these particulars, in which the upper part of the world are too high-minded, to attend to their duty; that I must comprehend the rest in a very few words; which I beg all, who are concerned, to reflect upon more distinctly, and apply to themselves impartially. Whoever makes his rank or

his wealth a privilege, either to say or do things to any one that are injurious or unbecoming; or to omit things that are right and good: whoever makes use of his inferiors for his own advantage or amusement, to their inconvenience, and neglects them when he hath done; whoever expects more from them, in any respect, than he hath a reasonable claim to; or makes his superiority, by the ostentation of it painful, or by the misuse of it detrimental, justly falls under the Apostle's charge, as a high-minded offender against man and God. And though offences of this kind are heinous in all persons, yet they are peculiarly so in christians; whose rule, which they profess to follow, is: *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another: mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.* (Rom. xiii. 10. 16.) *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross.* (Phil. ii. 3.—8.) *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* (1 Pet. v. 5.)

S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

By ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

The Duties of the Rich.

1 TIM. vi. 17, 18.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

IN this passage the Apostle requires the ministers of God's word, first, to caution persons of wealth and rank against the sins of which they are peculiarly in danger: then to lay before them the duties,

to which they are peculiarly bound. I have endeavoured already to obey his injunction, in relation to the former of the two sins, which he specifies, that of being high-minded; and now proceed to the latter, trusting in uncertain riches: which phrase comprehends placing the happiness of life either in wealth itself, or in those pleasures and amusements, which it is commonly made the instrument of procuring. The prohibition therefore of doing this extends to regulate the acquisition, the possession and use of a great fortune: and to go through the subject fully, each of these points must be considered.

1. The acquisition. In speculation it seems hardly to be expected, that any one, who is once master of enough to answer his real and reasonable wants, should feel any desire almost, on his own account, of having more: that he should take much pains about it, is very wonderful; and that he should do any thing wrong for it, quite unaccountable. But that they, who have superfluous wealth already, should both disquiet themselves and injure others merely to obtain a larger superfluity, is incredibly absurd. And yet, in fact, these are the persons whose passion for augmenting their incomes is usually the strongest. *When riches increase, set not your heart upon them,* is the caution of scripture (Ps. lxii. 10.); and accordingly the son of Sirach pronounces, *Blessed is the rich, that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold. Who is he? and we will call him blessed; for wonderful things hath he done among his people. Who hath been tried thereby, and found perfect? then let him glory.* (Eccles. xxxi. 8, 9, 10.) For indeed neither the mean nor the unjust things, to which necessity prompts the poor, are to be compared with those, which persons, far above necessity, will notwithstanding do for gain. Too many there are, who seem to account their follies and their vices in the number of things necessary; and though they have abundantly sufficient to live according to their rank, provided they would live prudently and virtuously, will submit to acquire, by wicked means, what they want only to support them in wicked

courses. And others, though unable to find out either good or bad uses for what they have already, yet are not at all the less eager for adding more to it; but will do almost any thing to enlarge, what they enjoy nothing from, except as Solomon observes *beholding it with their eyes* (Eccl. v. 11.); and he hath observed further, that *the eye is not satisfied with seeing*. (Eccl. i. 8. Comp. iv. 8. v. 10.) Desires increase continually, and cares along with them. Such acquisitions cannot really promote even their present happiness; or supposing they could, yet if using unfair or low arts to serve their own interests be excusable in the wealthy, in whom is it that any thing is inexcusable? No temptation is a warrant for doing wrong; but to do wrong, without any thing that deserves the name of a temptation, is exceedingly bad. And it cannot be nature, but merely an absurd habit, wilfully indulged, that tempts men to accumulate what they have no need of.

But though riches alone render eagerness for more very blameable and unbecoming, yet greatness added to them doubles the fault. For exalted rank absolutely calls for the exercise of honourable disinterestedness. And there are several things, in strictness, very lawful and honest, which yet are beneath people of condition; who, as far as they can with any tolerable prudence, ought ever to avoid the shadow of a mean action; and leave no room for the imputation of being misled by sordid motives in any part of life. For who shall set the example of resisting such considerations, if they give way to them? And yet what sort of example is there more needful or more beneficial? Not that people of birth and fortune ought to think themselves above all views, either of private advantage or of due recompence for their public services. This, in many cases, would be a false and romantic delicacy; unreasonably detrimental to themselves and their families, and productive of no benefit but harm, to the world around them. But in every case, to act with a steady regard to truth and right and common good, and, without hesitation, to prefer their character before their interest, when they interfere, is indeed the general duty of all men, but of the rich

and great above all. Whoever violates it in private life is almost sure to contract an infamy, that will make his gains a dear purchase. And in affairs of a more public nature the guilt at least is the same; often greater, as the mischief done, or however bad the example set, is more extensive. I am very sensible how common it is for men of seriousness and worth in other respects, not to consider these things as matter of conscience at all, and accordingly to take strange liberties in relation to them. But a little impartial reflection would soon show, that both reason and religion prohibit the obstructing of useful measures by opposition, forwarding bad ones by subserviency, encouraging wickedness or worthlessness, departing from justice and equity, for any selfish or any party end whatever. Were even a general good proposed to be served by it, evil is not to be *done that good may come* (Rom. iii. 8.); nor will any come from it that would not have been more effectually obtained, and longer preserved, by other means. And as for good merely personal, whoever aims at that by methods hurtful to his country, whatever outward advantages he may get by it, will lose all title to peace within. And it will be found, if not soon, yet, which is worse, too late, that his own interest, and that of his posterity, are so connected with the interest of the whole, that all advantages, made by a behaviour inconsistent with it, will be truly *uncertain riches*, as the text calls them; will *make themselves wings and fly away* (Prov. xxiii. 5.), in the time of general calamity; or perhaps long before, in the preceding general wickedness, which he hath been instrumental in hastening on: and then reproach and shame will be the only portion left to him or his. But how righteous soever the acquisition of their wealth may have been, the rich in this world have need that a charge be given them.

2. Concerning the possession of it. In the possession alone, some of them seem to have placed the whole of its value; *making literally*, as Job expresses it, *gold their hope, and saying to the fine gold, thou art my confidence* (Job, xxxi. 24.); and neither employing it to any benefit of their own, nor of any one else. Now keeping a heap of wealth,

merely for the sake of keeping it, is an apparent absurdity. Keeping it, merely for the repute of having it, is a very low inditement. And if laying up against future accidents be pretended, a moderate store will suffice for a reasonable security, and nothing can secure us absolutely. Indeed the larger the fortune, the more room for accidents, in one part or another of it; and the loss of a small part will be as grievous to a heart set upon riches, as that of a larger to another man. Besides, whoever lives only to the purpose of saving and accumulating, will be tempted by this ruling passion to a sinful neglect of the poor and the worthy among his friends and dependants, perhaps among his relations and very children. For that important obligation of *providing for their own, and specially for those of their own house*, (on which St. Paul, in the chapter before the text, (1 Tim. v. 8.) hath laid so great a stress, and which the covetous imagine, or pretend, they are faithfully performing), doth not consist at all in hoarding up for them as much as they can, but in bestowing upon them as much as they need. This not only the context proves, and the use of the original word in other authors, but the nature of the thing. For whoever is in want of any thing requisite, is evidently unprovided for, how much wealth soever another may say he keeps for him, whilst he really keeps it from him. And when any one hath made provision enough for those who peculiarly belong to him, to put them in a way suitable to their condition, he can seldom be bound, and is not always at liberty, to do more. The care of them indeed is the first demand upon him; yet after this is sufficiently taken, and even while it is taking, there may be many other most equitable claims; and they are all of them entitled to a proportionable regard by that general precept of reason, as well as scripture, *withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it.* (Prov. iii. 27.) Some occasions present themselves to every one, and frequent occasions to the rich and great, on which extending acts of liberality far beyond the narrow bounds of a family, is indeed but discharging a debt; which the participation in com-

mon of human nature brings upon us, and he that hath made us all of one blood (Acts, xvii. 26.) expects we shall pay. Nor will he fail to impute it for heinous guilt, at the day of judgement, (as our Saviour hath given us awful warning), if they whom he hath particularly qualified for works of charity, and expressly appointed the stewards and dispensers of what he hath bestowed on them purposely for that very end, shall, in breach of so sacred a trust, confine to themselves the bounty which was placed in their hands, that all around them might receive a proper share of it.

But some of the higher part of mankind adventure to go still greater lengths than this, to preserve the possession of what they have: detain from others, without scruple, what even in legal justice they are entitled to; and defend themselves against the demand of it, on the advantage-ground of their wealth, or their rank and station; which render it often difficult and expensive, sometimes impossible, for their inferiors to obtain redress. A most ungenerous, dishonest, tyrannical use of the prerogatives of their condition! Every one must see it to be so: and they, upon whom the eyes of every one are fixed, should have no little regard to this consideration, amongst others that are still weightier. The privileges granted by law to some were granted for the security of the public good, not the patronage of private oppression. And those, which others take to themselves, of awing or ruining, by the superiority of their fortune or their credit, such as presume to think of recovering what is denied them, are contrary to the whole intent of law and of human society. Not to say, that whoever hath a spark of true greatness, will be desirous to put any one, with whom he hath a controversy, fairly on the level for an equitable decision of it. and will say, with Elihu in Job, *if thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.* (Job, xxxiii. 5, 7.)

But perhaps they will plead, that the demands, which they refuse to satisfy, are unjust impositions. And without question, if that be really and evidently

so, they not only are warranted to stand out themselves, but ought to protect others in doing it, as far as they properly can. But then, it is never allowable to make this plea, without being satisfied of its truth: and men cannot be reasonably satisfied of any thing, concerning which they have not impartially sought for full information, and coolly considered it. They may have entertained suspicions, they may have heard reports, they may have received positive assurances, perhaps from the prejudiced, perhaps from the ignorant; but these things, without knowing what the other side hath to answer, are no foundations at all to determine upon, in matters of property: where it should ever be observed, as a general rule, that though we are indeed concerned to inquire what demands are ill-grounded, and reject them; yet we are much more concerned to inquire what are well-grounded, and comply with them. Our interest only is at stake in one case, and often a very small interest too; but our honour and conscience in the other. For whoever presumes, in any matter, to say, he will not do what justice or equity requires he should do, may in other respects be a worthy man, but in this he is very blamable: and were the same temper to influence his whole conduct, he would be completely wicked. Indeed, to say the truth, unjustly withholding things is much the same crime as unjustly taking them away. And whoever is in reality, as well as name, a man of honour, were it ever so much in his power, by his own authority, or the complaisance of others, to procure himself unequitable profits or savings, without any possibility of controul; will not endeavour, will not permit, that a preference or favour, injurious to any one person in the world, shall ever be shown him. He will check the baseness of those who would pay court to him by such vile practices, and obviate the fears of such as apprehend they may displease him by acting uprightly, where it makes against him. Far from contriving or desiring to be eased at the expence of those beneath him, he will require to be put on no better a footing than other men; and to be charged with his full share of the burdens of society, since he receives his full

share of its benefits. No matter, that while he behaves thus, others, and it may be those of his own rank, will not fail to behave very differently, nor he perhaps to be a sufferer by it. He will be content, if they please to have it so, that seeking and enjoying unfair advantages, shall be their character; and refusing and despising them, his.

But besides the sins, which may be committed in the getting or keeping of wealth, there are

3. Others, committed too frequently in using it; which persons of superior fortune and rank must be charged to avoid, and which undoubtedly the text comprehends. For *putting their trust in riches* is just as much the description of those, who place the happiness of life in the enjoyment of large estates, as those who place it in the possession of them. Nay indeed, as a very great part of the ancient wealth consisted immediately in plenty of those things, which give pleasure in the consumption of them; so voluptuousness, which surely the Apostle would not omit on this occasion, was perhaps more especially designed to be forbidden than rapaciousness, or excessive parsimony. And it confirms this, that when our Saviour is cautioning his hearers against laying up treasure for themselves, instead of being rich towards God; the parable, by which he chose to do it, was that of a person, who having, as he thought, abundant provision of good things for many years, determined upon it from thenceforth to *take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry*. (Luke, xii. 17—21.) Now this man is the representative of a numerous multitude, who agree entirely in his general scheme, though they differ from each other in several particulars.

Some trust in their riches so very inconsiderately, that they trust there will never be an end of them, let them be squandered as extravagantly as they will. So they set out with gratifying themselves in every thing, and looking after nothing; till, having been the admiration of the weak, and the pity of the wise for a few years, and contribute to undo their equals by their example, and their inferiors by the honour of employing and not paying them; they are reduced from the grandeur, which they should not have

affected, to difficulties that they need never have known. But they will feel them now the more severely for their preceding indulgences, and yet perhaps will be tempted to plunge forward, through meanness and wickedness, into deeper ruin, instead of retreating as soon as they perceived their mistake; which last if they would do, with an ingenuous acknowledgement of it, they would deserve to be treated with much tenderness, as having erred only through inexperience and thoughtless levity, not ill design.

Others, if they do not dissipate their estates in so wild a manner, yet use them principally to minister to their sensuality and debauchery; vices which men of superior fortune some-how imagine they have a sort of right to be guilty of; and men of superior rank behave, to many of them, as if they had no other end of their being. Commonly they do so in the beginning of life, and, in truth, not uncommonly to the end of it. Yet it is evident, beyond denial, that reason no more allows, and inclination no more excuses, these things, in the highest of mankind than the lowest; and were all mankind to practise them without restraint, there would be no living in the world. Indeed there is not any degree of vicious practice, but hath its proportional degrees of mischief, to some one or other, following it; especially as one wrong step leads on imperceptibly, and at last, (as the guilty are apt to think), unavoidably, to many others; and thus the most harmless and best-natured vices in appearance, produce perhaps the cruellest injuries. But the fatal effects of sensual indulgences and dissolute pleasures on the healths, the fortunes, the usefulness, the reputations, the peace, of those who give way to them, on the quiet and prosperity of families, on the good order and strength of civil society, are so obvious in themselves, so often insisted on from this place, and so universally acknowledged, (how little soever the acknowledgement influences men), that there can be no need to enlarge on them at present. And were they much less notorious than they are; yet, since God hath been pleased to interpose his pre-emptory commands in a case where

surely he may, and to deliver by express revelation such rules for the government of every appetite, as his infinite wisdom saw to be fit, it behoves the greatest of those, who presume to transgress the limits which he hath set them, to consider well with themselves what plea they will make to him another day for so doing. That nature prompts them to it, is not always a truth; for their excesses are often a perversion, a force upon nature: and it is never a justification, unless it be justifiable for men to do every thing to which they are inclined: when yet they show perpetually, that they can, if they please, curb their strongest inclinations of this sort, on motives far less considerable than those of religion. And for the remaining excuse of general custom, what is wrong for one to do is wrong for more; and God will not dispense with his laws, merely because a number of his creatures join to disobey them: besides that persons of rank are bound, both in honour and duty, to set the example, not to follow it blindfold. Examples of vice they have set, till those about them and beneath them have learned much more of it than their superiors, I believe, wish they had; but they must wish in vain, till they change their own conduct. And indeed, the men of condition especially, have left no room for any of themselves to make a distinguished figure in wickedness, without becoming abandoned to the most shocking and pernicious degrees of it; nor hardly then. But by a virtuous example they may be most honourably singular; for the esteem of goodness is still general, however rare the practice be. And not only the sober part of mankind, but the bulk of the immoral, (though doubtless more delighted with such as keep them in countenance, and often poorly affecting to ridicule others), yet, do, and must, inwardly, both respect and envy the worthy few, who adorn exalted rank by an uniform regularity of life, in the midst of every temptation to the contrary.

Another very bad use of wealth, which too many seem to place (if may judge from the vehemence which they pursue it) no small part of their happiness, is that of "Whence it arises, that so strar

fixes itself so deep in the hearts of such numbers, 'tis hard to say; whether it be an absurd covetousness, an unmeaning fondness for victory, a groundless persuasion of superior skill; an idle conceit of being favoured by fortune, or a wretched longing to get rid any how of unwelcome thoughts and tedious hours: whatever be its origin, its effects are most fatal. That all play is at all times, and to all persons, either unlawful or inexpedient, I would by no means affirm. But that very often it is so, cannot be denied; and every one, who takes a share in it, should consider seriously the nature and tendency of what he doth. If it inclines him to passionate, and perhaps profane expressions; if it inwardly agitates his mind, sours his temper, or wastes his spirits; if it tempts him to any sort or degree of fraud or unfairness; if it mixes him with company dangerous or unsuitable to him; if it devours more time than is consistent with a due attention to the business of his station, public or private, or to the regular order of his family; if it takes up any part of the time that ought to be spent in religious recollection of his ways, or other improvement of his soul at home in piety and virtue; if either by its direct and immediate, or any concomitant expences, it leads him into difficulties and distresses, that may lead him into sin; if it consumes a greater part of his income than justice to his creditors, the duty of providing for those who belong to him, or of liberal charity to every proper good purpose allows; or if, without any other harm, it engages his heart, and a fondness of it grows upon him; if it lowers his character, and so lessens his ability of doing good in the world; nay, supposing it doth him no harm at all, yet if it doth harm by his means to others; if it brings the worthless and the wicked into credit and familiarity with their betters; if it entices the well-meaning by example, or forces them by false shame, into doing any thing, which either in itself, or in their circumstances, is unlawful or unwise: in every one of these cases it is without question very blameable. And whoever impartially considers how he shall preserve himself from guilt, as to all of them, will easily find it requisite either to abstain wholly, or to restrain it in such a manner as to subject it to much narrower bounds

than most men do. For the great have, in this matter, as well as many more, trusted to their riches so indiscreetly, and neglected other considerations so intirely; and their inferiors, down to the lowest of those that can call themselves persons of fashion, (and even beneath that rank), have followed them so thoughtlessly and wildly, that play is become one of the principal sins of the present age, is spread to a degree that none of the former ever knew, and daily brings forth fruits that many succeeding ones may have cause to lament.

But supposing wealth be neither spent in this, nor any of the gross vices mentioned before; yet if it be employed in ministering to a course of more decent and refined luxury, or in supporting such a pomp of life as nourishes vanity and pride, or in filling so much time with unprofitable entertainment, that little room is left in the mind for objects of importance: these things also the rich and great must be charged to amend. For though their condition will permit plenty and elegance, diversions, and amusements, perhaps dignity and grandeur; yet it will not permit their living to these things, their being quite taken up with them, and lost in them. For not only the transition is too easy from several innocent pleasures to forbidden ones, and expensiveness in any way breeds powerful temptations, both to omit right and to do wrong things; but supposing these dangers avoided, yet a life devoted wholly or chiefly to the gratifications of sense, the enjoyment of greatness, or indulgence of trifles, is not the life of a rational agent; less still of a moral and religious one; but least of all of a miserable sinner, who has so very much to account for, and that so very soon. And what our account will end in, if we make it our great business here to delight ourselves, without looking further, St. Paul hath given us a strong intimation, when he saith, *they that live in pleasure are dead whilst they live.* (1 Tim. v. 6.) Our Saviour too hath forewarned us at large to the same purpose, in that awful parable of the rich man, who, being neither charged with injustice nor debauchery, but only described as *clothing himself in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day*, and receiving these as *his good things*, on which he placed his

S E R M O N LXXXIX.

By Archbishop SECKER.

The Duties of the Rich.

1 TIM. vi. 17, 18.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

I HAVE already, in two discourses on these words, explained and enforced the two cautions, which St. Paul requires that the ministers of God's word shall give to persons of wealth and rank, against the sins, to which they are peculiarly liable. And now I proceed to the duties of which he enjoins they shall be peculiarly reminded.

I. The first is, *to trust in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.*

heart; did notwithstanding after death *lift up his eyes in torment*, and petitioned in vain for a mitigation of his sentence (Luke, xvi. 19—31.) an undeniably just one upon all those who *trust in uncertain riches*, or any thing they can procure with them, instead of *the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy*. But this part of the text must be reserved for the subject of another discourse. I would only observe further at present, that our blessed Lord hath cautioned us no less against the cares than the pleasures of this life; and that his reason to avoid *overcharging our hearts* with either, is the most forcible that can be; *lest that day come upon you unawares*. (Luke, xxi. 34.) Riches and greatness no one thinks can secure him from death; but they can make many forget it as absolutely as if they did think so; and please themselves with the imagination, that they have *much good laid up for many years*, till, when they apprehend it least, *their soul is required of them*. (Luke, xii. 19, 20.) Therefore we should often call to mind the Psalmist's admonition: *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for himself; that he should live for ever, and not see corruption: when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish* (Psalm. xlix. 6, 7, 9, 17, 20.) like them in this world; but will wish in vain to be like them in the next, when all that have lived unmindful of God, *the kings of the earth* (as St. John foretells), *and the great, and the rich, and the mighty, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the face of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* (Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17.)

After warning them against placing their happiness in the pre-eminences, the possessions or pleasures of this world, it was very natural to direct them where they should place it: for somewhere we must. And his precept carries the proof of its own fitness along with it. For *the living God* must have the greatest power to reward our trust, and he who *giveth us all things richly to enjoy*, hath shown himself to have the greatest will also. All that we are, and have, and can hope for, proceeds from him, and depends upon him. Since therefore he hath made us capable of knowing this; duty, gratitude, and interest, conspire to demand, that we devote our whole being to him; use what he hath bestowed on us agreeably to the rules, which he hath prescribed, and for the attainment of the ends, which he hath in view; nor ever be so absurdly attentive to his gifts, as to forget the giver; whose bounty, the more largely we taste of it, ought surely to inspire the warmer love. And therefore the rich and great, on whom Providence hath conferred so many distinguished benefits and privileges, (of the value of which they seem in general highly sensible), are bound, beyond others,

to a most affectionate piety in return : and yet, is it not on the whole visibly true, that these of all others express the least piety in the whole compass of their behaviour ?

Too many of them scorn to observe or acknowledge any rule of conduct at all, unless it be fashion, worldly advantage, or pleasure. A great part of those who will own, and occasionally seem zealous for the obligations of virtue, or however of some virtues, manifest very little sense, if any, of the duties of religion. Some have never had he condescension, or imagine they never had the leisure, once to think of it : others have heard objections against it, or at least have heard there are such ; which, to prove themselves no bigots, they resolve to believe are unanswerable, without further inquiry. And not a few, who are fully persuaded, after a sort, both of the greatness and the goodness of God, still are as absolutely negligent of him, as if no regard whatever were due to him for either. Yet, if we are to reverence authority, and love mercy, and believe in veracity, and be sorry for offences, amongst men ; why are not all these things unspeakably more necessary in relation to our Creator ? Some persons, it may be, when they are pressed upon the subject, will plead, that they are by no means without inward regard to God ; though they cannot say, they give much outward demonstration of it, in acts of worship. But how real, how deep, how practical, this regard is, they would do well to ask their hearts very carefully : for he that sees their hearts knows with certainty, they that see only their lives, can form a strong presumption ; and no one will ever be a gainer, by attempting to deceive either God, or man, or himself.

But supposing them sincere, what reason can there be, why respect to God should not be paid outwardly, when respect to every superior besides is ? For surely his knowing we have it, is no sufficient reason for omitting to express it : since visible and stated acts of homage to him appear notwithstanding, both from reason and experience, highly requisite, to preserve and strengthen a sense of religion in our own minds, and to spread it in the world. Or could we have doubted

of this otherwise ; yet, when he hath expressly required himself to be worshipped, both in public and in private, what pretence have we to a shadow of piety, if we either disobey or think meanly of that command ? And they among the great, who neglect to honour God, discern very clearly the necessity, not only of their inferiors paying honour to them, but of their paying honour to persons that are a little above them : and would think the excuses extremely frivolous in their own cases, which they are determined, shall be good and valid in his. What can this inconsistency mean ? Surely they do not think it beneath them, to *fall down and kneel before the Lord their Maker* (Psal. xcvi. 6.), while they can bow so very low to a fellow creature, perhaps a worthless one. And yet really, the manner, in which they sometimes speak of religion, looks a good deal this way. I mean, when they own its importance to keep the vulgar in order, and their obligation to attend on its exercises conscientiously, for that purpose ; but intimate, that some how or other they themselves are exempted. Now the difference in the eyes of God, between the highest and lowest of men, is as nothing ; and if any part of the world hath need to be restrained by the ties of religious duty ; the upper part, being the least subject to other restraints, hath the greatest need : nor can it be more their interest, that the rest of mankind should have a sense of piety kept up amongst them : than it is the interest of the rest of mankind, that the great should. But if this were otherwise, they may depend upon it, that if they will slight religion ; such as see them do so, will not be influenced by them, to respect it. And therefore all the choice they have is, either to show some regard to its precepts themselves ; or to be content, that their families, their dependants, and the world about them, shall have none. This latter is the resolution that many seem to have taken : what will follow from it hath been already felt too much ; and if they go on, will be felt continually more. But God grant they may rather see, before it be too late, both the wickedness and the folly of throwing off that reverence, which is so justly due to him, whose laws are, every

one of them, provisions for our temporal happiness in this world, as well as our eternal felicity in the next. Men of rank and fortune have a much greater concern in the welfare of society than others, and therefore are more bound in point of prudence to support religion: they have a much greater ability of doing it, and are particularly intrusted with it, and therefore are more bound in point of conscience. But what completes their obligation, in both respects, is, that if they neglect it, the endeavours of others will, humanly speaking be all in vain. There may be some hope, even for a wicked nation, while the fear of God remains in any considerable number of the wealthy and ruling part of it; but when they once come to be thoroughly corrupted, then every thing is ripe for ruin. And therefore the prophet Jeremiah, after complaining very pathetically of the sinfulness and impiety of the bulk of his countrymen, still thought there was one resource left. But when he found that those of high condition were as bad, or worse, than the rest, he immediately gives up all, and pronounces their destruction: *I said, (speaking of the common people), these are poor, they are foolish; they know not the way of the Lord, and the judgement of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them: for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgement of their God. But these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. Wherefore a lion out of the forests shall tear them, and a wolf of the evening shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.* (Jer. v. 4—6.)

But it is possible for us to keep up a sufficient profession of religion, to secure both public order and domestic tranquillity; yet by no means have a sufficient sense of it, for obtaining eternal life: and what will the former avail us without the latter? It is not a merely prudential and political piety; it is not one, that will only form our behaviour into an outward regularity, or affect our hearts transiently now and then, that will stand us in stead hereafter: it must be a fixed inward principle, that moves us

effectually to look beyond every thing in this world, to God the fountain of all good; and to take him for *our hope and our portion in the land of the living.* (Psal. cxlij. 6.) He offers himself for such, and surely we ought to accept the offer. He is able to make us happy, and nothing else is: whatever earthly good we have most pleasure in, quickly fails: or if it did not, in a few years life itself will fail: and *what is our hope, when God taketh away our soul?* In that awful hour, if we have not him to trust in we shall have nothing; and the foundation must be laid now, if we would build upon it then. But honours, riches, and pleasures unaccountably turn away men's attention from these obvious truths, and present them with such temptations, to trust in themselves and the external advantages of their condition, for all the happiness they need; that they cannot be admonished too often, to *trust only in the living God*; and that only in such a manner as he hath declared they safely may.

Some have a bold and irreverent confidence, that all is well with them in respect to the divine favour, on no other ground than that they are guilty of only such faults, as the generality of the world are: as if God would not dare to punish a majority; and men might be as wicked as they would provided there were but enough of them so. But over and above this, persons of rank seem extremely apt to think, that they shall be treated with peculiar indulgence: whereas indeed, since *much hath been given them, much will be required of them* (Luke, xii. 48.); and in comparison, *Mercy will soon pardon the meanest, but the mighty shall be mightily tormented.* (Wisd. vi. 6.) Others acknowledge the necessity of a virtuous life for all men, but indulgently presume their own to have been so, which in strictness hath been far otherwise; and then *trusting in themselves that they are righteous,* (Luke, xviii. 9.), imagine God their debtor. Or if they do confess they have been faulty; repentance and amendment, (which they apprehend to be sufficiently in their own power at any time), they conceive, immediately blots out all, and gives them a claim of right to pardon and reward.

Now, on the contrary, reason itself shows, that forgiveness is an act of mere voluntary mercy; and that nothing is due from justice, even to a creature perfectly obedient, but that his being be not made, on the whole, worse than not being. To this, experience adds, that our best obedience is very imperfect: and agreeably to both, the gospel teaches, that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* (Rom. iii. 20—26.) It teaches also, that *we are not sufficient of ourselves, even to think any thing; but our sufficiency is of God.* (2 Cor. iii. 5.) *That by his grace we are what we are; and when we perform good works, it is not we, but the grace of God which is with us* (1 Cor. xv. 10.); and proceeds from his *holy Spirit, whom he will give to them that ask him.* (Luke, xi. 13.)

A doctrine, which so entirely excludes boasting (Rom. iii. 27.), must be very disagreeable to human pride in general: but especially mortifying to those, whom the flattery of the world, and of their own hearts, hath accustomed to consider themselves in a light, extremely different from that of miserable sinners. For this reason, amongst others, in the early ages *not many mighty, not many noble, were called* (1 Cor. i. 26.) effectually: and down to the present, worldly greatness hath ever been a powerful obstacle to christian humility, in faith, as well as practice. What our Saviour said to the Jews: *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour, which cometh from God only.* (John v. 44.), holds but too true concerning the upper part of those who call themselves his disciples. They therefore should apply with peculiar care, to become such indeed, by looking into their own breasts, and considering well their need of the divine mercy: *casting down imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every*

thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. x. 5.) Trusting in ourselves, can afford us only a false peace for a time, which will ruin us at last; *but whose putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side.* (Ps. xxxii. 10.) He hath a covenant-right to pardon and comfort, assistance in all good, protection from all evil, and everlasting life to crown the whole.

But then to make his title sure, he must exert his trust in all circumstances, *and walk by faith, not by sight.* (2 Cor. v. 7.) Even good persons are strangely apt to lay much too great a stress on worldly advantages. Hence it is, that they desire them so earnestly, and delight in them so highly; without considering, that God and a good conscience, can make us far happier, without them, than others are with them. Were we but convinced of this, we should feel, with what justice the Psalmist pours contempt on the vehement pursuers of what this earth hath to give. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? but, Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will lay me down in peace; and take my rest: for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.* (Ps. iv. 6—9.) For want of reflecting on whom we depend, we are apt to be elated in our prosperity, and say, *we shall never be moved; when indeed it is the Lord of his goodness that hath made our hill so strong; and the moment he turns his face from us, we shall be troubled.* (Ps. xxx. 6, 7.) From the same cause we are apt to be dejected when afflictions befall us, or dangers threaten us; forgetting, that though *great and many are the troubles of the righteous, the Lord delivereth him out of them all* (Psal. xxxiv. 19.) in this world, if it be expedient for him; if not, he shall be supported under them, and they shall increase his reward in the next. But the wicked *God shall destroy for ever, and root them out of the land of the living: the righteous also shall see it and fear, and say with awful approbation of the divine justice, Lo this is the man that took not God for his strength, but trusted unto the*

multitude of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. (Ps. li. 6, 7, 8.)

We should all therefore learn to live more to our Maker; to imprint on our hearts, and exert in our whole behaviour, a stronger sense of his present providence, and future rewards. It would be a direction, a security, an improvement, a comfort to us, beyond expression. But especially they, who have the greatest number of interesting and pleasing objects in this world to fix their thoughts upon; they, who may seem to have the least need of looking further, have indeed the greatest, to be frequently charged, as the Jews were by Moses; *beware lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein; and when thy silver and thy gold is increased, and all thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.* (Deut. viii. 11—14.) Now if those persons forget him, who have the most reason to remember him, thankfully, it is double guilt, and indeed proportionable folly. For what can be more obvious, than that considering all our good things, as the marks of his kindness to us, must unspeakably enhance their value; nor can it lay us under any other than beneficial restraints in the use of them. Then besides, how naturally doth this consideration lead us forward to the yet more delightful one, of that sweet security, in which we may live here under the superintendency of so gracious a being: and of those infinitely better things, which he hath yet in store for us hereafter. *This God is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide unto death,* (Ps. xlviii. 14.) *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory. Whom have I in heaven: but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24, 25.) There is nothing enthusiastic, nothing extravagant, in such reflections and feelings as these, when they are grounded on good evidence of our title to God's favour; and in that case we cannot act a more pious or

more rational part, than to indulge or enjoy them. Only we must not dwell upon contemplation so as to forget action; but, as the Psalmist directs, *trust in the Lord, and be doing good.* (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) Agreeably to which rule,

2. The second duty prescribed in the text, as peculiarly necessary for the rich and great, is, *that they do good, that they be rich in good works.* Extensive and important as this duty is, its nature is so well understood, and the motives for practising it so obvious, as to make it unnecessary for me to enlarge particularly upon it. And indeed if men of rank and fortune observe duly the preceding part of the Apostle's charge, they will easily be induced to observe the concluding one. If they are neither so high-minded as to neglect, and despise their fellow-creatures; nor so selfish as to trust in uncertain riches, in the acquisition, the possession, or voluptuous enjoyment of them, for their happiness, but expect it only from their acceptance with the living God; they will naturally imitate him whom they desire to please, particularly in his beneficence, the most amiable of all his perfections. And it is not by their wealth only that they are able and therefore called to do good, but by their whole behaviour, by the example of their piety and justice, their abstinence from criminal and imprudent pleasures; by an active, yet mild, public spirit, and an honourable disinterestedness in private life, united with a decent frugality; by attention to the interests, present and future, of their families, their friends and dependants; conducted in such manner, as always to be consistent with a general care, to encourage and recommend worthy persons and actions, and treat the unworthy with the disapprobation and contempt which they deserve. These are methods, by which those of rank and influence may do much greater service to mankind than large liberalities would do; and by a contrary behaviour, in any one of the above-mentioned instances, they may easily be authors of more mischief than their whole estates would compensate for. Now the Apostle hath determined, that *though they bestow all their goods to feed the*

poor, yet if they have not the charity to act in other respects as they ought, it will profit them nothing. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.)

But still, though almsgiving is by no means the whole of beneficence, yet it is an essential part in those whom God hath qualified for it. And he hath given them all things richly and in plenty, not merely for themselves to enjoy, in the vulgar sense, but that others may enjoy a due share of them, and they the pleasure of imparting it; the worthiest and highest enjoyment of wealth that can be. This therefore is the purpose for which we should remember we are intrusted with it, and be bountiful in proportion to the trust; for to with-hold but part of what is due, knowingly, is the same kind, though not the same degree of unfaithfulness, as to with-hold the whole. Indeed how much exactly is due, God hath no where determined; nor could there, in the midst of so great a variety of circumstances, have been given particular rules, fitted to every case: nor hath any pious mind, that endeavours to judge and act as rightly as it can, the least reason to be anxious for want of a more precise knowledge, where it is not to be had. But in general, that both our charity and our generosity should bear some decent and liberal proportion to our abilities, and the rich in this world be rich in good works also, not only the text enjoins, but common reason dictates; and if we are deficient, the poor widow with her *two mites* (Mark xii. 40.), will far outdo us in that very virtue, by the practice of which our Maker justly expects we should appear distinguished.

Nor is it sufficient for the rich to give plentifully, but they must do it, on every fit occasion, speedily; be ready to distribute, and not stay till the circumstances of the poor are beyond recovery, or their spirits broken under the weight of their misfortunes, but make haste to help them, and, as far as possible, prevent distress. *Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee* (Prov. iii. 28.) *and delay not to shew him mercy.* (Ec-

clus. xxix. 8.) Nor is it enough to be outwardly expeditious, but we must be inwardly willing to communicate; not part with our benefactions grudgingly and of necessity, as obeying the divine command merely because we dare not disobey it: *for God loveth a cheerful giver.* (2 Cor. ix. 7.) To the poor indeed it is all one from what principle we give, but to us the difference is infinite. In the heart lies all the value. Ever so little will be accepted of heaven, if it proceed from a mind that would gladly have done more; and ever so much will be despised, if we secretly wish we could have saved it. St. Paul's exhortation therefore is of unspeakable importance; *Let that sheweth mercy let him do it with cheerfulness.* (Rom. xii. 8.) And indeed, what can we have more cause to rejoice in doing? It is very comfortable to think that we are able; it is delightful to think, that by our means the miseries of God's creation are lessened; it is no small satisfaction to be loved and blessed in this world, but it is the greatest possible to lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the next, *that we may lay hold on eternal life* (1 Tim. vi. 19.) and have it said to us by our Judge at the last day, *well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* (Matt. xxv. 21.)

S E R M O N X C.

By ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

The Duties of the Poor.

MATTH. xi. 5.

—And the poor have the gospel preached to them.

THESE words are part of our Saviour's answer to the disciples of John the Baptist, who came to inquire, whether Jesus were himself the Messiah, or only a prophet commissioned to foretell his coming. For it appears from the first chapter of St. John's gospel, that many of the

Jews expected, besides Elias, another prophet to precede or accompany their great Deliverer; mistaking perhaps the prophet described, Deut. xviii. for an attendant of the Messiah, instead of the Messiah himself, whom they were apt to consider only in the character of a king. And as Jesus had now manifested himself some time to the world, without taking this character upon him, it was natural enough for John's disciples to imagine, that perhaps he came in the other only. John himself indeed knew, and probably had told them the contrary; but finding them still desirous of further satisfaction, was extremely willing they should have it: and to make the inquiry as easy to them as possible, directs them to propose the question, not in their own name, but in his. On their doing it, Jesus performs in their sight a considerable number of his usual beneficent miracles, joined as it should seem, with suitable instructions; and then, without declaring himself expressly, (which he chose, for wise and kind reasons, to avoid before the multitude), dismisses them with an answer, taken, the greatest part of it, out of the words of Isaiah; in which he had foretold, that the Messiah should perform just such miracles, and give just such instructions. For we read, *that in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and unto many that were blind he gave sight.* (Luke, vii. 21.) *Then he answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things, which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

The prediction, of his applying himself peculiarly to instruct the lower part of the world, it is probable, he purposely reserved to the last place; because his doing it (besides its being the completion of a prophecy) was, though not a miracle, as the rest were, yet a singular proof, both of the humanity of his temper and doctrine, and of his disinterestedness too. For this method was incapable of doing him service, and in fact

did him no small prejudice with those, who had the power of that nation in their hands! The Jewish teachers and rulers, who were the same, kept the common sort at a very great distance; and on that amongst other accounts, were highly revered by them. The familiarities therefore, to which Jesus condescended, immediately set all these against him; and furnished them with an opportunity of representing him and his disciples as equally contemptible. Thus, when their own officers, (whom it seems his discourses had struck as powerfully as they did the rest of the multitude) could not help applauding him before their faces, *Necce man spake like this man;* their answer is, *Have any of the rulers, or the pharisees, believed on him? This people, which knoweth not the law, are cursed.* (John, vii. 45—49.) But indeed the humble and unbiassed minds of the illiterate are much better judges of truth, when proposed to them, than such as are blinded with learned prejudice, worldly interest, or sensual pleasures. To the former therefore principally our Saviour vouchsafed his instructions, grieving to see them scattered abroad, as *sheep having no shepherd* (Matth. ix. 36); and they, receiving his doctrine into *honest and good hearts* (Luke, viii. 15.), became in great numbers his followers; and at first were almost the only ones he had. For St. Luke tells us, *he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.* (Luke, vi. 20.) The gospel indeed makes all blessed who receive it, both by its useful precepts, and its gracious promises; yet the poor especially, as they have most need of those directions and supports in this life, and assurances of happiness in the next, which it communicates. But then, to receive them, they must be not only poor, but his disciples. It is not being in a low condition, but being virtuous and pious in that condition, that entitles persons to God's favour, as it is not being wealthy and great, but making an ill use of wealth and greatness, that provokes his displeasure. So that the happiest or the wretchedest here, may, according as they behave, be infinitely more happy or

wretched hereafter. Our Saviour therefore, we find, in St. Matthew, expresses himself thus: *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matth. v. 3.), they, whose dispositions are suited to their mean circumstances, reasonable and resigned, lowly and submissive.

Preaching the gospel to the poor comprehends therefore, of necessity, instructing them in the duties, as well as the comforts, belonging to their state. And as our Lord and Master did both, so should his ministers. The duties of the rich and great I have lately recounted, and pressed upon them, very freely, from this place. And now, I hope, you, that are the inferior part of the world, will patiently bear, in your turn, the same well-meaning plainness of speech that your betters have borne; and make the proper use of it, as God grant them to do. Under the general term, poor, is contained a considerable variety of degrees; each therefore should apply peculiarly to themselves the precepts that peculiarly belong to them, and take no offence at the rest. Of such as are common to all, they may all reap the benefit; and the highest may receive some admonition from what is said to the lowest; as it will contribute to regulate, not only their way of thinking and behaving to their inferiors, but their temper and conduct in other respects. For to be poor in spirit, a very different thing from mean-spiritedness, is incumbent on the wealthiest and the noblest.

1. The first duty to be enjoined you, is, contentedness in your poverty. A hard saying, you will be apt to think, when scarce any one is contented in the midst of riches and honours. But the discontent of such, you will own, is without reason. And if it can at all arise from mere humour, without any thing in fact to justify it, possibly yours may be unjustifiable too. In order to try then, whether it be or not, let us consider what ground for complaint you can alledge.

That some should have greater plenty than others, is no more a hardship, than that some should have better health or understandings, or longer lives. If there could be a claim of right to any of these

things, all men would have an equal claim; but as they are intirely the free gifts of God, he may certainly give them in what proportion he pleases. He hath made some order of beings, as we see with our eyes, much lower than the lowest of men; he hath made others, as we are taught in scripture, much higher than the highest of men: and doubtless he could have made them unspeakably higher than they are. If then any part of the creation may complain of mere inferiority, every part may complain without end. If any part may complain merely because it suffers something, no part, that we are acquainted with, is exempt from all suffering. And amongst other evils, why may not God permit some to feel poverty?

Indeed, without perpetual miracles, how can it be prevented? For supposing equality of circumstances were to be established at this very time, it could never subsist. One person would be industrious and prudent, and mend his affairs; another, negligent or injudicious, and ruin them. Now that each should possess for his own, what his own care and labour hath acquired, is no more than strict justice; that what each dies possessed of, should descend to his own children and relations, preferably to others, is surely but reasonable. And yet from hence will of course follow, by degrees, all the wealth and all the poverty, that we now see.

The first christians indeed at Jerusalem had all their possessions in common (Acts, ii. 44, 45. iv. 33, 35.); but this neither appears to have been their practice any where else, nor to have lasted there, nor to have been designed to last, nor to have been more than a voluntary agreement. For St. Peter tells Ananias and Sapphira, that they needed not, unless they pleased, either to have sold their land, or put any of the purchase-money into the common stock: but that pretending they had put it in all, (which entitled them to a maintenance), when indeed they had secreted a part, and how large a part we know not, was an impious fraud. (Acts, v. 1—4.) Community of goods therefore was no command then; and very soon after we find, in the New Testament, the

distinction of rich and poor established and allowed every where amongst believers. Nor can the destroying of it be attempted, without the most dreadful injustice, confusions, and mischiefs in human society; nor could the attempt succeed. And even suposing every one were to agree in the scheme, who can say what would follow upon it? In all likelihood, so universal a neglect of industry, that but few of the present conveniences of life would be provided; and perhaps mankind in general would be more destitute than most of the poor are now.

If then there must be high and low in the world, why is it harder that you should be of the latter sort than that others should? Were they in your place, ought not they to be content? and if so, why ought not you now? It may be, notwithstanding the different appearances you make, the difference of your happiness is very small; or possibly you have the most. The pleasures, for which you envy the great, are usually very tasteless to them; and would be so to you very soon, if you were in their place. Then, amidst all that they seem to enjoy, you little know what many of them suffer, and how much of it they suffer from being in the station they are. You will say indeed, that the inconveniences you feel you cannot avoid; whereas, if they feel any, it is their own fault. But, in truth, there are disquiets, belonging to their rank, from which yours is exempt. Or allowing it to be their own fault, what follows? Why that your sufferings proceeding from God's providence, if you behave well under them, you will be rewarded for them; and theirs, proceeding from their own wrong conduct, without repentance, they will be punished for them over and above. And who can tell, but were you in the same situation, you might fall into the same faults? Power and rank, and leisure and plenty may indeed be used to excellent purposes; but prove commonly, in fact, such strong temptations to the worst of sins, that a station less exposed to danger, and which obliges you in several respects to behave only as all persons ought to behave, may be the

greatest worldly blessing you could have had; even though it were accompanied with much more grievous outward disadvantages than it is. But indeed some of those disadvantages consist in mere opinion and fancy. You are miserable, because you think yourself poor; at the same time there are those, who if they were but in your condition, would be happy, for they would think themselves rich. And the very persons, whom you envy, because they are above you, it may be are pitying themselves all the while, because others are above them. This, you see, is only fancy and folly on both sides.

But as to more real inconveniences. Just in the same manner, that custom makes a life of pleasure insipid to the great; it makes a life of labour and hardship tolerable and comfortable to their inferiors: unless they set their own minds to make it otherwise. Indeed when persons are reduced, from ease and affluence, to take pains and feel straits; this is a burden much heavier. But even then, reason and time, and especially religion, will teach you to support it very well. If it proceed from your own fault; you have little cause to repine, and an useful admonition to learn more wisdom. If from God's disposal of things, his justice and goodness will, sooner or later, amply recompense you for it; and all his servants will have compassion on you, and help you, in the mean while. The exhortation therefore is very reasonable: *Fear not, my son, that we are made poor; for thou hast much wealth, if thou fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is pleasing in his sight.* (Tob. iv. 21.) *Whatever is brought upon thee take cheerfully; and be patient, when thou art changed to a low estate.* (Eccclus. ii. 4.) But such as are born to that estate, may, for the most part be very happy in it, if they will. And so many of them are visibly fully as happy as the rest of the world; that the defect must lie in their temper, not their circumstances, if others are unhappy. When indeed any uncommon difficulties befall them: when they have numerous families, and perhaps little employment:

or when old age disables them from working; or sickness calls for relief, which they have not the means of procuring; then their case is very grievous; and all, who know it, should be tenderly affected, and assist them plentifully. But even at such times of distress, they should recollect, that their superiors are by no means entirely free from the same uncasinesses. Persons of considerable rank often find it hard enough to bring up and provide for a number of children decently: and when infirmities and diseases attack the wealthiest, though they may have better advice and accommodations than others, yet these things are not able to lighten the burthen near so much as they that want them imagine. And whoever hath health; which the common people that live regularly, have the most of: and a good conscience, which, all may have that will; seldom needs to be miserable on account of his circumstances. Health, said the wise son of Sirach, is above all gold: and a strong body above infinite wealth. There is no riches above a sound body: and no joy above the joy of the heart. (Ecclus. xxx. 15, 16.)

These comforts therefore you should value as they deserve: you should reflect also, that of every natural gratification, which God hath provided for man, (and all the artificial ones are trifling in comparison,) he hath provided you a good share. You can behold the light of the sun, breathe the freshness of the air, enjoy the beauties of the seasons, relish your food, and be refreshed by your sleep, as well as the greatest monarchs on earth. The higher and social pleasures too, of kind affections, real friendships, frank and cheerful conversations, are as much within your reach, as they can be within any one's if not more. And if your rank be not an honourable, it is however a necessary one: and proper care, to do the business of it skilfully and diligently, will and must, and you cannot but be sensible does, make you regarded and sought after by your betters. On the whole therefore, even the poor have sufficient cause, not only to be content, but thankful to heaven, for its goodness to them.

Still the straits and hardships of some of them, though God's help makes the worst supportable, may leave them small reason to be fond of life. But so may the pains and sorrows of the wealthiest. And even this situation affords you one advantage, that you will have less inducement to regret the approach of death; may detach your affections without reluctance from a world, the enjoyments of which are sadly embittered to others by the thoughts of leaving it; and comfort yourselves with the prospect of going to that place, *where the weary be at rest, and the servant is free from his master.* (Joh. iii. 17, 19.) *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, that hath prosperity in all all things! But acceptable is thy sentence to the needy, and to him that is vexed with all things.* (Ecclus. xli. 1, 2.) Yet were deliverance from present evils by future endless insensibility the thing hoped for, this would be a melancholy relief. But religion sets before us an infinitely brighter view of things: assuring us, that *God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him.* (James, ii. 5.) Here then is the strong consolation, that on however bad a footing any may be, in their temporal concerns, we are all on a level, as to our eternal interests: or, if there be any difference, it is in favour of the suffering part of mankind. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* (Matth. v. 4.)

But, admitting that there is by no means any ground to complain of God, the poor will alldge however, that they have reason frequently to complain of their fellow-creatures, the rich and great, for shewing so little regard to them in their necessities. And far from denying this, it is our duty, who are ministers of the gospel, to plead it for them, and excite others to abound more and more in tender compassion and liberality towards them.

But then, whilst we endeavour, on all occasions, that due care may be taken of you who are poor; we must remind you not to be insensible of what is done, nor to require more than is reasonable, And

here, in the first place, all the common people of this nation ought to esteem it an unspeakable blessing, that they live in a land of laws and liberty; where the meanest is protected from the oppression of the greatest, to a degree, that would be incredible in most countries. For too many countries there are, in which your small properties, your whole disposal of yourselves, and your very lives, would be subject to the will of arbitrary masters: and you would neither dare to speak a free word, nor even to worship your Maker in the way that your consciences direct you. Surely then your condition requires of you, great thankfulness, not only to God, but to your earthly superiors, who allow and preserve to you such valuable privileges; and great respect, in your manner, both of behaving towards them, and thinking of them: which is very ill shewn by murmuring against them for things that you cannot be judges of, and in all likelihood are utterly misinformed about.

But farther: the lowest part of the poor in particular, should consider, what ample provision for their wants is made here by law; such as no other nation upon earth hath established; what noble foundations, for their relief under sickness or accidents, and for the education of their children, private charity hath laid: and these things should dispose them to a better opinion, both of the comforts of their own condition, and of the goodness of those, to whom they are owing. If still you are any of you in distress, recollect, whether your own mismanagement hath not been the principal occasion of it: and lay the blame, which you ought, upon yourselves, before you lay any upon others. However, even in this case you are to be relieved; but not so liberally, as if you had deserved better. Consider too, whether even now you are not able to get or to save more than you do: and remember that no one is bound to give you, what your own diligence and frugality would supply you with, if you pleased. But supposing your want, and your merit, as great as possible; it is not every one, to whom you apply, that can do for you what you imagine. Undoubtedly the rich are often hardhearted: but perhaps the poor

are full as often, immoderate in their expectations, and unjust in their censures. You do not know, what sums people are able to give in charity: for, in all likelihood, you are neither well acquainted with their incomes, nor the various demands that there are upon them, of other sorts; which last may easily be greater than you can well apprehend. Besides, you do not know, what they do give in charity. That which they refuse to you, or your acquaintance, they may bestow, and perhaps much more, on others, who possibly are full as proper objects, whatever you may think. And I doubt not, but many a man is frequently cursed, for denying a trifle to a clamorous public petitioner; who hath been largely and willingly bountiful to private distresses, perhaps but the hour before; and it may be, do him more service by his prudent choice, than his liberal distribution. We ought not indeed to pass over any of the poor, from partiality or penuriousness; but *give to every one that asketh* (Luke, vi. 30), so far as our circumstances permit us, and the end of giving, will be served by it. But as giving to some would do harm, and we cannot give to all enough to do them good, charity itself forbids us to interpret this precept in the fulness of its liberal extent. Yet God forbid, that any should seek a pretext for relieving few or none, because many are undeserving, and they cannot relieve every one. Such a plea will not excuse them in the opinion of men here; much less in that awful judgment hereafter, when *the rich and the poor shall meet together before the Lord, the maker of them all.* (Prov. xxii. 2.) But as the wealthy should not contrive to evade almsgiving, so the needy should not be forward to suspect them of it; but resolve to *judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will make manifest the counsels of the heart.* (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

One thing more, to be observed by you in favour of your condition, is, that God hath not left you to depend solely on the piety and charity of the rich; but provided, that their love of gain, their vanity, or their luxury, shall be made what they do not design them for, the means of doing some good to their inferiors, by employing them; as well as much hat

by setting them an ill example. More good might be done indeed, and all the harm avoided, would they act from the principles they ought. For as the follies and vices of one part of mankind, are far from being the proper method of maintaining the other. But however, it is a remarkable instance of the kindness of Providence, to have ordered things so, that they, who mean you little or no service, shall do you a great deal; and contribute, without thinking of it, to make your condition comfortable, while perhaps they are making themselves wretched, both in this life and that which is to come.

Upon the whole then it appears, that you have no ground of complaint against God; and much less, perhaps than you imagined, against men; that your state hath many comforts belonging to it; and usually not many necessary sufferings, beyond what others feel. But when any of you have the most, only do your duty faithfully and prudently, and you may compose your minds with a full assurance, that at length all shall end well: *Your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for you an eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor. iv. 17.) in the next world; and in this, as God hath enabled you to bear them hitherto, he will doubtless enable you to bear them still; nay, perhaps lighten your burthen when you least think of it. *For the poor shall not always be forgotten; the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.* (Psal. ix. 18.) *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, on them that put their trust in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and keep them alive in the time of famine.* (Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19.) *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) Some means or other heaven will point out to you, to prevent your falling into the utmost extremities. Providence is your security: the greatest persons on earth have no better. Without a title to God's favour, no one can be happy; and with it, no one need be miserable. For, *whether a man be rich, or poor; if ye have a good heart towards the Lord, he shall at all times rejoice with a cheerful countenance.* (Theclus. xxvi. 4.)

SERMON XCI.

BY ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

The Duties of the Poor.

MATTH. xi. 5.

—And the poor have the gospel preached to them.

ONE principal mark of true religion is its tendency to make men first good, then happy. Precepts of piety and virtue, unattended with rewards, will always be ineffectual; and promises of rewards, independent upon piety and virtue, must of necessity be false. Christianity therefore comprehends both, and proposes them equally to all mankind; requiring obedience from the greatest, as a condition of God's favour; and offering eternal felicity to the meanest, on performance of their duties. For this reason I have lately set before you the peculiar duties of the upper part of the world, and have since proceeded to those of the lower. The only one of the latter, which I have hitherto mentioned, is, that they be content with their condition; and neither murmur at all against God, who never gives them cause; nor complain of men more than they have cause; nor be dejected in their own minds; but compose and support themselves by attending to the comforts of the state they are in, as well as the inconveniences of it. With this I chose to begin, and to insist on it largely; because, when once the poor are convinced, that they may be happy, they will naturally and cheerfully endeavour to become so: for which end they must learn,

2. To be humble: a virtue closely connected with the former. For as pride is usually the origin of discontent; so discontent in return nourishes pride; till after thinking falsely their present situation too bad for them, men come by degrees to think hardly any sufficiently good. Now all may find great reason for humility, on viewing the imperfections and frailties of human nature in general, and their own in particular: but the poor have additional subjects of mortification to reflect on; they see and feel themselves inferior to most around them, dependent probably on some for their livelihood; and are ex-

cluded from the possibility of many improvements and advantages, which others enjoy; still this is no ground for dissatisfaction. For that some are in a better condition, cannot really change them into a worse. It remains, notwithstanding, just what it would be if none were better. And making comparisons only to disquiet yourselves, is great folly. But making them, to learn from that inferiority in which you are plac'd, a suitable way of thinking and behaving, is so needful and so obvious a lesson both of wisdom and duty, that neglecting it is inexcusable.

Those minds must be grievously hardened in the wrong, that can have no impression made on them by such peculiarly strong calls to be modest and submissive. Nor will this prove a less unhappy disposition, than it is a faulty one; but, in all likelihood, you will suffer more from the absurd haughtiness of your temper than all the hardships of your outward circumstances put together. Instead of esteeming or pitying you, the world will dislike and scorn you. For the son of St. John expresses only what every one in some measure feels, when having said, *three sorts of men my soul hateth and I am greatly offended at their life*, he puts down in the last place, *a poor man that is proud* (1 John viii. 2). Pride in those, who should be the furthest from it, is extremely disgusting, even when it is humbles. But usually it leads on to insolent behaviour. Now insolence to superior may produce unspeakable mischiefs to you; but will always produce some, and though it be confined to your equals or inferiors, will be the source of perpetual uneasiness as well as guilt. Yet I am afraid it is exceeding common for the lower ranks to use those, who are but a little beneath them, with such contempt and harshness as they seldom or never experience from the highest above them and would not think it tolerable, if they did. But surely then you should be willing to give the treatment, you expect to receive; and seeing, as you must, how well condescension becomes your betters; think how ill assuming and overbearing becomes you. But supposing your haughtiness injurious or displeasing to no one else, it will be greatly detrimental to yourself. You have formerly been in good

circumstances, perhaps as you are descended from a good family, and therefore you will not bring down your heart to your present condition. But what follows from this? Only that struggling under the yoke makes it gall you the more, and you are a thousand times uneasier than you need to be; whereas would you but accommodate your spirit to your station, you would soon be sensible, that with men as well as God, *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Mat. xxiii. 12); you would enjoy, in this world, a peaceful composure of soul and in the next, that blessedness, which is reserved for the meek and lowly.

But of all sorts of pride in the poor, the strangest and most pernicious is that, which tempts not a few of them to imagine, they are of too much consequence to do any thing for their own maintenance. Indeed when they have formerly been of good rank and lived in plenty, especially when they fall from it is not owing to wilful sins or follies, it should be the endeavour of their relations and friends to provide for them, in some degree, suitably to what they once were. But if such as are especially concerned, either cannot or will not do thus, there is little room to expect, that others should contribute enough towards it to be effectual. And therefore the unhappy persons whose case it is, unless Providence raised them up some unlook'd for support, sink down of course to the level of the common poor: and it cannot be more the duty of the charitable to help them, than it is theirs to help themselves by any sort of honest employment, for which they are qualified. Once Heaven had placed you in a higher sphere, now it hath reduced you to a lower: the occupations of the latter are as much incumbent upon you at present, as those of the former were before, and your attention to them will be as amply rewarded by the Disposer of all things. You must support yourself, either by virtuous diligence, or by vicious courses. The latter nothing can justify; the former, in whatever way you are called to exercise it, will be no reproach, but an honour to you. And the rich and great, far from rejecting and disowning their poor kindred or acquaintance, for condescending to any useful business

when necessity requires, ought to encourage and applaud them. For it is an excellent mark of a right and good mind, that they rather chuse to *work with quietness, and eat their own bread* (2 Thess. iii. 12.), than importune others, or lead themselves into temptation. And indeed the temptations, arising from poverty and distress, are so very dangerous to those who have lived in affluence and credit; that as soon as ever they find difficulties coming upon them (if they have any regard to a good conscience), they must immediately reduce their own expences, lower the appearance and expectations of those who depend on them, and so conduct every thing, as may least expose them to the hazard of acting amiss, and best secure them an honest subsistence. For, whatever a false honour may suggest to the contrary, *Better is he that laboureth, and aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself and wanteth bread.* (Eccclus. x. 27.) The mention of this matter hath led me insensibly to a

3d Duty of the poor, and a very important one, that of industry; to which humility will greatly incline them, nor will contentment be at all inconsistent with it. For a principal reason why the poor may be justly contented, is, that by diligence they may go on very comfortably and their being well enough satisfied with their present situation is no manner of objection against endeavouring to better it, when opportunity offers. Every one indeed is bound to be industrious, in a way suitable to his rank, and contribute his proportion to the common good, in which he shares. Those of high degree are able to do much good singly; the poor have each of them very little separate power: but, considered as a collective body, it is on their application and labour that the wealth and strength of nations, all the conveniences and elegances of life, indeed the peace and good order of societies depend; for nothing but right employment will keep them out of wrong. These considerations make their diligence of infinite importance to the public; and there are others, besides their interest in the public, that make it of equal importance to themselves. It is true, in point of conscience, the rich are

no less obliged to it than you; but in point of worldly necessity, the difference is very wide. Nor yet is it any disadvantage to you on the whole, that in this particular you cannot well avoid acting as you ought. For to how many of your superiors is it the greatest unhappiness, that their circumstances enable them to lead the lives they do!

But, in your situation, indulging idleness and its companions, can last but a very short time; and then will bring after it such dreadful consequences, of distress and reproach, and temptation to every thing bad, (extending not only to you, but to all who belong to you), that you must resolve to follow some honest employment closely. Be it ever so much against your liking at first, you will certainly come in time to be very well pleased with it; every one that hath persevered, hath found it so. And then you will spend the rest of your days in satisfaction and comfort; you will be at peace within, and respected both by your equals and your betters: if you have children, you will look upon them with delight, and they upon you with gratitude; you will make a provision against sickness and accidents; and when you come to old age, you will be able to afford yourself the rest and quiet you want, because you were willing to take pains before; whereas they, who make ease and pelasure the business of their early years, will find shame and sorrow the portion of the remainder. They wickedly neglect the appointed way of supporting themselves; and such as do, will commonly have bitter experience of what it is to crave support from the bounty of others. *The life of him, that dependeth on another man's table, saith the son of Sirach, is not to be counted for a life—Begging is sweet in the mouth of the shameful, but in his belly there shall burn a fire.* (Eccclus. xl. 29, 30.) Sayings of this nature are not in the least designed against persons, whom Providence had rendered incapable of supplying their own necessities. They have nothing to be ashamed of, but ought to be assisted with tenderness and respect. God hath sent them to us to receive at our hands what is their due; and *whoso mocketh such poor, Solomon hath declared, reproacheth their Master*

her. (Prov. xvii. 5.) But those who would not be industrious when they could, deserve but little relief afterwards; unless deep repentance entitle them to a better share; and they that will not now when they can, deserve none at all. It was Paul's repeated command to the Thessalonians, *that if any one would not work, neither should he eat.* (2 Thess. iii. 10.) And we should not observe this command, both in the disposal of our own charity, and that of any other with which we are intrusted, either by private benefactors, or by the laws of the land. Overseers of the poor are intrusted by the latter; intrusted to act with humanity and compassion indeed, but with prudence and frugality at the same time. All therefore who in their turns come to serve that office, I hope consider very seriously, that the poor, who are fit for employment, ought, as far as possible, to find it for themselves, or have it found for them; and that when either of these things can at all be done, maintaining them in idleness is only teaching them to be useless and wicked. Indeed the poor themselves should consider, that contriving to live upon alms, when they are able, wholly or in part, to live upon the produce of their own labour, is injuring the community: by doing nothing to promote its welfare; injuring all who contribute to their support, by laying a needless burden upon them; injuring the rest of the poor, by keeping from them what else they would receive in great plenty. For no one can bestow so much on proper objects, who is misled to bestow on improper ones too. And the frequency of such impositions makes many unwilling to give what else they would; and furnishes others with a specious pretence for withholding what else, with any decency, they could not. Therefore industry, besides its being an indispensable duty of the poor, in itself, is necessary to their practising a further duty, to which I proceed in the

4th place; That is honesty. For to beg, instead of working, is one sort of dishonesty. To undertake any work for another, and not do it diligently, is a second sort; often a very provoking, sometimes a very mischievous one. Yet there is a third still grosser, to which idleness

tempts the poor but too powerfully, mentioned in Agur's wise prayer, *lest I be poor and steal.* (Prov. xxx. 9.) Now stealth, open or secret, how commonly wherever it be committed, is much too plainly a sin to be in general defended; and therefore I need not prove to you the unlawfulness of it. But there are two cases notwithstanding, in which some of the poor seem to think it scarce any fault at all. When either a very small matter is taken away, or it is from a very rich person, which makes it small to him. But every one hath the same right to the least part of his property that he hath to the greatest. And let any one be ever so wealthy, his wealth is his own; and though unquestionably he ought to give of it to the poor, yet they have no manner of authority to take it without his consent. If they had, it is easy to see into what universal confusion the exercise of that authority would bring the world. But farther: small misdemeanours of this kind occasion great disquiet; men apprehend themselves unsafe in all about them; know not whom to trust; and the innocent are often suspected and sufferers, for what the guilty thus do. Besides, almost all offenders begin with little faults; and from these they venture gradually on, to worse and worse, till they come to make no scruple of the most capital crimes, and perhaps fall under the sentence due to them. Always remember therefore to beware even of small sins; and carefully observe one rule more, that when any thing is committed to your trust, being dishonest in that, and disposing of any part of it in a manner, which you know you ought not, and are not allowed, is one of the basest kinds of stealing. Wastefulness also, and even mere negligence, approach to the same sin; for by both you injuriously diminish what is not your own. But the most active cause of dishonesty in the poor is, that finding a great deal of time and pains requisite to get but a small matter, they are strongly tempted to shorten their trouble by unfair methods. And possibly you may thus gain some advantages for a while; but very possibly also you may fail, and be discovered and punished even for your first attempt; or if not, every new attempt will expose you anew to the same danger; and it is not one in great numbers that escapes long.

Besides, the continual consciousness of your guilt, and fear, of being found out and hated and scorned ever after, will be a continual torment to you; nay, if you are only suspected, and cannot fully confute the suspicion, which a guilty person can never do, this alone, in all probability, may be enough to ruin you. For the livelihood of the poor depends almost entirely on their character, and their character chiefly consists in their honesty. That will make amends for considerable defects in other points, but nothing will make amends for want of that. Or could you escape every evil that you justly fear through this whole life, yet remember another is to follow it very soon, in which you must account for all your deeds. And he who hath commanded, that *no man defraud or go beyond his brother in any matter*, hath declared at the same time, that *the Lord is the avenger of all such*. (1 Thess. iv. 6.)

A further virtue, which the poor are greatly concerned to practise, much more carefully than many of them do, is that of speaking truth. But this is so near akin to behaving honestly, the reasons for both are so much the same, and they that do nothing amiss have so little temptation to say any thing false, that I shall pass it over at present. The

5th Duty therefore of the poor, which I shall insist on, is that of frugality; without which your honesty will never be secure, and the fruits of your industry will be very foolishly thrown away. Indeed to deny yourselves what you can well afford, and really want, would be cruel and unnatural; suffering the worst inconveniences of poverty without need. But to make your straight circumstances yet straighter, for the sake of idle gratifications, and distress yourselves in necessities, only to indulge in trifles and vanities, delicate food, shewish dress, ensnaring diversions, is every way wrong. You will be hankering after more and more pleasures and amusements, till they quite beggar you; your superiors all the while, whom you affect to imitate, will despise you; your equals will hate and censure you; and your children, for whom at this rate you will provide nothing but a bad example, will have cause, I had almost said, to curse you; whereas, by avoiding unnecessary expences, you will preserve the fruits

of your labour intact; be able to make good use of advantages; to stand your ground under losses and disappointments, for they must be expected; to lay up for themselves, if you prove to have occasion; if not, for those that come after you; nay, to give alms out of your little, and exchange it for treasures in heaven. Saving is very different from being covetous; it is the surest foundation for being bountiful. And even the poor should extend bounty to any that are still poorer, whenever they can really spare it. Nature and reason call upon them to do so; agreeably to which the Apostle requires men to *work with their own hands, that they may have to give to him that needeth*. (Eph. iv. 28.) And as our Saviour hath taught us (Mark, xiii. 42.), that our charity shall be estimated in proportion to our abilities, the lowest have as much encouragement as the highest to do even in this way, all the good they can. A

6th Virtue, closely connected with frugality, is sobriety. One should think, that they who find themselves perpetually in straits, could have little temptation to be guilty of excesses. But uneasiness at their condition drives some, a false notion of recruiting their spirits invites others, and unmeaning custom seduces yet more, into that destructive vice of drinking; which, after soothing you perhaps with a short-lived gaiety and forgetfulness of sorrow, will greatly augment the dejection of your minds, as well as the difficulties of your affairs; and thus force you almost to a repetition of the same remedy, which will be followed of course by an increase of the same evils, till your fortunes and health are both completely ruined. Your morals too, for the most part, by indulgence in this one respect, will be gradually corrupted in every other, even if you do escape those desperate sallies of wickedness which prove more speedily fatal. Your families at the same time, if you have any, will be abandoned to wretchedness; your children perhaps murdered in their infancy, by giving them the same liquors with which you are more leisurely destroying yourselves; or if they do survive, are pretty sure to inherit, from such parents, nothing but bad habits of body and mind. If therefore you have any

sense, either of prudence or humanity, you will surely avoid this treacherous sin; which pernicious arts, and mistaken policy, have placed but too much within the reach of the lowest of the poor: or if you have fallen into it, you will renounce it instantly, and resolutely bear the uneasiness which abstaining from it may give you for a while, (for you will certainly overcome it by perseverance), rather than plunge forwards to your utter undoing here and hereafter. A

7th Duty of the poor, which must be mentioned, is that of chastity; a duty, indeed, of all persons; but so far peculiarly incumbent on them, as the transgression of it brings them to more immediate ruin. In one sex it is followed by total loss of honest employment and reputation; by contempt and scorn, even from the men that have seduced them; by grievous temptations to destroy the fruits of their criminal pleasures, and to become abandoned to common prostitution, and with it to every sin, the consequence of which will be every misery of human life. In the other sex it is almost always accompanied with breach of solemn promises; with shocking hardness of heart, where the utmost affection hath been professed; with heavy expences, that often lead to the grossest dishonesty. And both sexes, in common, it exposes to loathsome and fatal diseases, and to a dreadful sentence of future condemnation; for *they, which do such things, the scripture hath declared, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* (Gal. v. 21) Beware then of a sin so peculiarly dangerous; and for that purpose beware of every indiscretion that may entice you to it. I now proceed, in the

8th Place, to another duty of the poor, which one should think might sufficiently recommend itself, good temper amongst each other. This is necessary in every rank, in order to have any real enjoyment of life; and the more necessary in yours, as you have the fewer enjoyments of other sorts. If you receive harsh treatment from those above you, that perhaps you cannot help; but there is no manner of need of your giving it amongst yourselves. You have felt probably what bitter things

injurious language and insolent behaviour are; why then will you make use of them? You know by experience the need of tenderness and pity, why will you not shew it to those who have equal need? You and they are fellow-sufferers in the world; surely that should unite you in mutual kindness, not provoke you to increase your evils, by being hard upon one another. And yet, I fear, some of the greatest hardships, both in world and dead, which the lower part of mankind undergo, proceed from persons who are of low rank themselves. And how far they are capable of carrying such outrages, and how sad the effects of them are, Solomon hath expressed by a very strong comparison: *A poor man, that oppresseth the poor, is like a sweeping rain, which leaveth no food.* (Prov. xxviii. 3.) I have only a

9th, And last duty to recommend, but one peculiarly implied in preaching the gospel to you, a serious and deep reverence for religion. Religion is intended, not only for the direction, but the comfort of all degrees of men; and all have need enough of it, but you the most by far. Others have honours, or pleasures, or wealth, elegant amusements, or curious inquiries, to engage their thoughts; and find some kind of satisfaction in these things, such as it is, and so long as it lasts. But you have nothing, that even seems considerable, to sweeten this world to you, but the expectation of a better. And well may it be for you, that you are reduced to that, as your only choice, which beyond comparison would be your best, if you had ever such plenty. Seek your consolation therefore in what is abundantly capable of giving it you; make the precepts of the gospel your business, and its promises your joy. Christianity is peculiarly formed for your benefit. Its laws are your charter, by which you claim a right to pity and love from your superiors, as members of the same body; and we, its ministers, are your advocates to plead your cause with them; authorized to offer them eternal happiness, for being kind to you; to denounce condemnation against them, if they use you in any one respect, cruelly; and to assure you, at the same time,

that the worst treatment they can give you shall turn to your good. Think then how justly St. James hath declared *the poor in this world rich in faith* (James, ii. 5.); and let the rich and great, if they will, be profane and vicious, and take the consequences; but *let no man beguile you of your reward* (Col. ii. 18.), either by corrupting your principles, or misleading your practice. Religion hath graciously provided for you the repose and comfort of this sacred day, which else you had never known. Make it not a time of acting contrary to religion, but steadily use the opportunities it gives you, of learning and being reminded of your several duties, which you must be sensible you need; of having the honour to join on equal terms with the highest of your fellow-creatures, in presenting petitions and praises to God in his house, and feeding at his holy table. The remainder of the Sabbath employ, partly in *considering your ways* (Hag. i. 5. 7.), and improving your hearts, by reading, meditation, and prayer, in private partly in a cheerful but harmless and prudent, social enjoyment of the leisure which heaven hath allowed you. When the days of labour return, recommend yourselves every morning to the blessing of the Almighty, return him thanks every night for his protection, and offer up to him in your hearts, the work of each day, as done in obedience to his will, and in hopes of his reward; for these things you will find a support and refreshment beyond all belief. In your whole communication learn both to avoid and abhor that monstrous custom of oaths and curses, which are intermixed continually in the common discourse of too many of the poor; with great irreverence towards God, who hath expressly forbidden them; to the great horror and grief of all good persons; with great danger of running into frequent perjuries, and all manner of profaneness; and without any pretence of profit or pleasure, to make the least amends for so much sin. I cannot and need not, go through the other obligations of religion at present. Your attendance here, your bibles and other good books at home, will sufficiently inform you of the nature and importance of them: and I beg you not to imagine,

that because you are each of you singly of little consequence in the world, God will take little notice of your conduct; but think and act like the Psalmist, *I am small, and of no reputation, yet do I not forget thy commandments.* (Psal. cxix. 141.) There is nothing beneath God's attention, any more than above it. The meanest things on earth were made and are continually preserved and inspected by him. But indeed the most considerable thing on earth is the behaviour of his rational creatures; and whether that be right or wrong is of infinite moment in his sight; but whether they be high or low, of none at all. He *regardeth not the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands* (Job, xxxiv. 19.), and shall all account to him for their deeds. Our blessed Redeemer preached the gospel to the poor, at least as much as to the rich; he laid down his life equally for both; the Holy Spirit offers equally to both the sanctifying influences of his grace; the souls of both are equally capable of, and will equally be consigned to, everlasting happiness or misery. *I saw, saith St. John, a throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* (Rev. xx. 11, 12.)

This awful scene first imprint strongly on your own minds; then on all you can, especially on those who belong to you. You have little else to give them, but if you give them effectually a practical sense of their duty to God and man, it is an inheritance beyond all treasures. You must see how wicked, and how miserable by their wickedness, multitudes of your own rank are; suffer it not to be the case of those who are dearest to you; but use the little spare time you have (for you will always have some) and the little ability you possess (for God will assist you), to instil into their hearts such early principles of piety and virtue, as may afford you just hopes of their being good and happy by your means in this world, and then following you, to increase your blessedness in the next.

S E R M O N XCII.

By ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

On following an imaginary and worldly Interest to the Neglect of Christianity.

PHIL. ii. 21.

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

THESE words contain both an account **what** the practice of mankind is, and **also** an intimation what it should be. And therefore, in discoursing upon them, it will be proper,

I. To consider what is meant by *seeking our own things*.

II. What by *seeking the things of Jesus Christ*.

III. To explain and prove the assertion, that *all* seek the former, *not* the latter.

IV. To shew what we are to learn from it.

I. *Seeking our own things*, is pursuing our own inclinations and fancies, or imagined worldly interest. And many strange fancies people of all ranks indulge. Some never ask themselves, whether the course which they are taking is likely to be for their good; others never slacken it, though from time to time they strongly suspect it is not. Often they adopt without examination, the opinions of those about them, whom yet they are far from esteeming; and either will not see, that better judges think differently; or do see it, and will not regard it, but follow custom blindfold, even against their own liking. Or it may be, they think a little, but think short; neither to the end, nor to any considerable part, even of the present life: imagine what pleases now, must always please; and what brings no inconvenience yet, will never bring any. Indeed, usually, it is their principal point, to acquire the things which others wish for, though visibly of no real use; and they are vehement for whatever will make them envied as happy persons, though it produce little else than vexation and guilt. Some will not trust

even their own experience against their prepossessions: but force themselves to believe, that the lives which they lead must needs be delightful, though they feel the contrary. Many lose the opportunities, and even the relish, of moderate and rational pleasures, by a wild pursuit of visionary and extravagant ones. Nay, there are some, who not only follow wrong ways, but, as the text hath it, seek them; go purposely out of the plain road, as it were, in search of misery. It were much to be wished, that all these were more studious of their interest, even their temporal interest, than they are: it might be one step towards becoming what they ought. But still the most faithful and assiduous worshippers of the world's great idols, applause, advancement, profit, power, entirely mistake, if they hope that any of these things will either secure them lasting enjoyment, or preserve them from acute misery. A little reflection discovers, that happiness consists in somewhat stable and inward: whence the more thoughtful have learned to seek it in themselves. But, alas! when we inspect ourselves, what a mixture do we find, of ignorance which we cannot enlighten, of weakness which we cannot strengthen, of wrongness which we cannot set right! Besides that all creatures, as such, are essentially insufficient for their own happiness; there is by nature a void within us, which must be filled from above, or we must remain for ever craving and unsatisfied. Let us therefore look upwards, and consider.

II. *The things which are Jesus Christ's*: the benefits that he hath procured for us, with the knowledge of them that he hath communicated to us. And indeed what have we of value, that is not his! Some have pretended they could investigate all the doctrines, the duties, the rewards of religion completely by their own reason, and form themselves to a suitable disposition by their own strength. But the history of heathenism clearly shews, that no one ever did this; nor probably therefore ever would. The one true God was scarce known. False deities of the worst characters were adored, instead of him, with rites that seldom, if ever, mended their votaries, often corrupted them. The common rules of social life were, great
a fault;

means thoroughly understood; as the shocking custom of exposing children to perish, the barbarous combats of gladiators, the promiscuous and unnatural practices of lewdness, publicly allowed, give dreadful proofs. But the internal virtues of the heart were still less regarded; and they who seemed possessed of them, ascribed the merit wholly to themselves: very few said so much as the Pharisee, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are*: scarce any with the Publican, *God be merciful to me, a sinner.* (Luke, xviii. 11. 13.) Yet how continually are the best of men guilty of faults. But they had hardly any notion of the universal need of repentance, or any name for humility of soul. Forgiveness of injuries was very unsteadily taught: benevolence to enemies lay yet farther out of sight. Courage injuriously exercised, patriotism shewn by invading the rights of their neighbours, and numbers of other splendid sins, passed for heroic excellencies. There was very little hope of future bliss to give men spirit in doing what was right, and less fear of future judgment to deter them from what was wrong. Such were the best instructed nations; and such, or worse, had we been probably now, but for the compassion of Jesus Christ. Indeed without him we should never have known, till too late, how bad our condition was. The real state of mankind, with respect to God, was, in a great measure, unknown to them. till he underwent what he did, at once to lay open to us our danger, and to free us from it on most equitable terms. Even the mysterious parts of what he taught for this purpose lead us to reverence the Divine Wisdom, and think modestly of our own; while the more distinctly intelligible direct us to every thing that is right and fit.

The gospel hath laid the foundation of our duty in that pleasing and thankful veneration of God, which his creating bounty, his providential care, his redeeming mercy, excite: and which tends to inspire us with a deep concern for whatever we have done offensive to him, an earnest desire of obeying his commands, an humble sense that we need his assistance, a firm persuasion that he will grant it to us, a reliance on him for every thing
ant, in regard to this world or

the next. This excellent frame of mind must powerfully suppress irregular appetites of sense, immoderate desires of wealth, vain fondness for pomp and pre-eminence, anxious cares about worldly events. And on such love of God Christianity builds its second great commandment, love of our neighbour: a duty, enjoined in a higher degree, and carried to a greater extent, though still a reasonable one, in scripture, than in any other institution of religion. It prescribes the most accurate and tender attention to the obligations which result from the nearer connections in life, the most industrious endeavours to be useful in whatever station we fill, the most affectionate faithfulness to the community of which we are members, tempered with universal goodwill to the rest of mankind: benevolent respect towards those who excel us; readiness to pardon, as far as can be safe, all who have wronged us; esteem of whatever in any person deserves it; sincerely kind wishes to those whom we esteem the least; compassion for the wretched, and relief to our utmost ability, though we straiten ourselves. Nor doth our blessed Redeemer expect us only to pity, as he did, the temporal wants of men; but, as he did also, their spiritual ones unspeakably more; a precept peculiar to the gospel, and comprehending a great variety of important particulars: provision for instructing the young and ignorant; and combining afterwards pious advice with outward relief to the sick and needy; seasonable warnings, and mild reproof, when there is hope of their being regarded; constant circumspection to set a prudent, as well as innocent example; that we lead not others into danger, by what, perhaps, we can do ourselves with safety; but submit to considerable restraints, rather than let our liberty, as the Apostle expresses it, *become a stumbling block to them that are weak.* (1 Cor. viii. 9.) Studying to observe these rules, for they require and merit study, *is seeking the things that are Jesus Christ's.* And they are opposed to our own, not as being really contrary even to our present interest: very far from it. Only through the inbred disorder of our hearts, and the general prevalence of evil habits, we are apt to delight in very opposite dispo-

sitions : and hence a good life comes to be a self-denying one, which else would be the constant practice of self-love. The ambitious would *seek the true honour that cometh from God*, (John v. 44.); the selfish would *have respect to the heavenly recompence of reward* (Heb. xi. 26.); the lovers of pleasure would *secure the fulness of joy which is for evermore*, (Psal. xv. 12.); and the means of being happy here and hereafter would evidently appear to be the same. But now the difficulties of performing our duty are so great, and our failures in it so many, that, amongst the *things that are Jesus Christ's*, we must seek with peculiar earnestness his grace to strengthen us, and an interest in his merits to procure us acceptance, which thus the weakest and worst of us all may be sure of obtaining.

Yet, great as these blessings are, the Apostle hath said, *that all men seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ*. Let us therefore,

III. Examine into the meaning truth of this melancholy assertion.

It is plainly not to be taken in the utmost extent. For he had given the contrary character of Timothy, just before, as he hath of others elsewhere. But he may be well understood to say, that all absolutely have some share of blame in this respect : and the generality, which in common speech the word *all* frequently signifies, are highly and dangerously blameable. For who can deny this to be fact? Many are vicious in every way that inclination prompts them to. Many, who regard some parts of virtue, disregard others, perhaps avowedly. The more uniformly regular would do well to ask themselves, Whether it is from a real inward sense of duty, or for the sake of reputation or convenience? They who make a conscience of behaving right in common life, do they make any of paying due honour to God? Our strongest obligations of every kind are to him : yet numbers think highly of their own merit, while they neglect him and, it may be, pique themselves on neglecting him. If we profess ourselves believers in him, do we stately and fervently pray to him, and give him thanks for his daily blessings? Do we live in his fear and love,

and the hope of his future mercy? Supposing we sincerely embrace natural religion; have we carefully enquired into the truth of Christianity; unprejudiced by attachment to forbidden pleasures, by the vain fancy, that nothing can be true which we comprehend not fully, by ludicrous or sophistical misrepresentations? And, to guard us against these, have we consulted proper books and persons? If we call ourselves Christians, do we observe conscientiously all the institutions of Christianity; or slight them when any trifle intervenes; and do we observe them otherwise than as mere forms? Do we use them to impress on our souls the importance of the doctrines, the pardon, the grace, the rewards of the gospel? And do we employ our faith of all these things to improve us in every part of a Christian temper? This temper, and our inclinations, too often interfere. Which do we prefer? And where do we lay the foundation of our conduct? We ought not to lay it in attention to our own interests or amusements, joining now and then with them a little appearance, or perhaps a little reality, of religion, provided we can make it agree with them. But the rule is, *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. (Mat. vi. 33.) The groundwork of every thing good, is a devout resolution to do our whole duty. Each is to do it suitably to his own station; but all, in whatever station, high or low, are to make it their inviolable concern : for God *hath given no man licence to sin*. (Ecclus. xv. 20.) Whoever doth not feel this truth as the most important one that belongs to his existence; and govern his conduct by it, in tying as well as ordinary cases, hath not *sought the things of Jesus Christ* in a due manner. And think then, I intreat you, how few have. A sad reflection! but we must remind our hearers to make it. Else how much pleasanter would it be to congratulate the good on their happy state, than to terrify the wicked; to encourage the modest and timorous, than to confute the presumptuous, and alarm the thoughtless!

But, such being the condition of the world, let us now consider,

IV. What we are to learn from it.

And certainly we ought to learn great mildness towards others, who are faulty;

since, more or less, all are so. Even the first Christian, even the first of the Christian clergy, for of these, it must be owned, the Apostle peculiarly speaks in the text, fell very short of perfection. And ever since, the best have had their defects, and the worst their good qualities. Let us therefore think and hope, as well as with any reason we can, of all. Yet still, they who abandon themselves to wickedness, and especially they who labour to pervert others, either in principles or practice, and to make a bad world worse, be they ever so agreeable, be they ever so useful to us, are to be avoided, and checked with more care, the more danger there is of their doing harm. That we are unable, from various circumstances, to exert this right spirit, may sometimes, perhaps often, be a just plea; but ought never to be made a false pretence. The firm purpose of doing it should always be kept in mind, and executed as soon as possible, with amends for the delay. At the same time, in proportion as the bad give real marks of reformation, they should be diligently encouraged, yet with prudent, and cautious, and gradual kindness. But above all the honest, the virtuous, the conscientious, the pious, ought to be countenanced, brought forward, and cherished, as *the salt and the light of the earth* (Matth. v. 13, 14.), who preserve society from corruption and dissolution, who shew men the way to present and future happiness. Nor should they be rejected or despised, though sometimes inferior in qualifications of less moment, nay, though, in some respects, hurting, through mistake, their own good cause; of which, however, it is very unjust, though very usual, to condemn or suspect them, without or beyond reason.

But the principal point is, what we are to learn in regard more immediately to ourselves. If the world be so bad, there is great need to ask our hearts, what are we who make a part of it? Conforming to it implicitly is by no means the rule either of Scripture or of reason; yet is it not too much our practice? A little honest home inquiry would soon furnish the true answer. But we turn our eyes from what we have no mind to discern, and try to deceive not only others, but ourselves. Yet to what

end? God knows the truth. Men will know it, if they do not; and angels too. We ourselves know it in part all the while; and shall know and lament it to eternity, if we refuse to take the proper notice of it in time.

Examine therefore what the tenour of your conduct is. If it be dissolute or intemperate, the necessity of amending it is glaringly visible. If, though otherwise innocent, you consume your days chiefly in trifles; such waste of precious time, given for other ends, is highly criminal. Besides that, both the supinely indolent, and the busier votaries of idle amusements, expose themselves to various temptations, and set a dangerous example to those around them: the tendency of which as it spreads, must be, to make persons of all ranks, even the most important, and, by consequence, the community composed of them, insignificant, contemptible, and vicious. Further still; though your disposition be to things of more use, and so far commendable, yet if on any occasion you indulge either resentment or malevolence, however calm, towards any of your fellow-creatures; if you are injurious or hard-hearted, from selfishness; or but thoughtlessly inattentive to the rights, the interests, the wants, the feelings, of those whom you ought to regard, you may thus have contracted, in many ways, most heinous degrees of guilt. Nay, supposing you have been, and are, beneficent as well as harmless, but less so than you might; even this defect is a failure of duty. Not that you are to give way to scruples; there is no end of them; but to consider maturely, and consult worthy friends; what you can add to the good which you do already. Possibly ~~it~~ may be more than you imagine. Be it ever so little, do it: but according to the best of your judgment, and God will accept it. But, at the same time, be sure to remember, that the rightest demeanor in worldly matters will not suffice; but our chief regard must be to him who made us, and whose therefore we are. From his goodness all that we enjoy proceeds: from his authority over us all our duties flow: and those, which are owing immediately to himself, surely require our principal care. But such duties as natural reason teaches, are far from being the only concern of those to whom he hath prescribed additional

ones, founded on the important alterations which our primitive state, as we learn from Scripture, hath undergone. Man is a fallen creature: *We are dead*, as the Apostle strongly expresses it, *and our life is hid with Christ in God.* (Col. iii. 3.) Our hope of future happiness lies not in ourselves, but is reposed in the hands of the blessed Jesus, who purchased it with his blood: *and where our treasure is, there must our hearts be also.* (Matth. vi. 21. Luke, xii. 34.) Without affectionate and habitual movements of the soul towards the Father of Mercy, the Author of Salvation, the Inspirer of Holiness; without a deep sense of past guilt and present imperfection, an humble faith in the merits of our glorified Redeemer, and a firm reliance on the grace of the Divine Comforter, all our virtue, all our piety, will avail us nothing. For, when we have done our best, *we are but unprofitable servants.* (Luke, xvii. 10.)

You will object perhaps, that indulging contemplations of this nature would engross our whole thoughts and time: the affairs of common life must be utterly neglected for them. But are you indeed at all near the borders of that danger? Or do not such objectors take thorough care to keep far enough out of the reach of it? You are by no means called only to acts of devotion, or only to the more sublime of moral duties. Prudent and moderate concern for our worldly interest is a duty. Every propriety and decency of life is a duty. Even ornamental accomplishments have their value. But from these concessions men conclude, that they may safely pay their main attention to what deserves but the smallest part; and imagine they are abundantly good Christians, almost without any one peculiarly Christian action or sentiment. At best, a few pious formalities, practised now and then, constitute their whole religion: and the rest of their life, and all their heart, is given up to what hath no tincture of religion in it; whereas inward reverence of God, as he is manifested to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, ought to be our ruling principle; and extend its influence throughout each article, of our business, our conversation, our private thoughts.

Perhaps you will object again, that so very serious a turn of mind as this, will cast a gloom over every thing and one must

have some pleasure surely. But learn to be pleased with what you ought; and you will have inexpressibly more pleasure than you possibly can else. In other things you take pains, no small pains, to acquire a taste; often, for what is of no value; sometimes, for what is bad; and perhaps, after all, can succeed no further, than to put on the affectation of liking what you really do not, or get by habit a wretched craving for gratifications, which you cannot but despise and condemn. Employ yourselves better. Esteem what is estimable, and it will exalt instead of debasing you: love what is amiable, and it will reward your affection. *Love him above all, who hath first loved you* (1 John, iv. 19.); and his service will be delightful: become such as he requires, and you will find satisfaction in every thing. It is a strange mistake, to imagine the burthens of religion insupportable, while we take much heavier upon ourselves from fancy and fashion. Were the gospel to enjoy the fatigues, the expences, the dangers, which on reflection we shall perceive caprice and custom do, that one argument against it would be accounted decisive.

The most serious person in the world may justly be also the cheerfullest. Even penitents, in the midst of their sorrow, at the very beginning of their amendment, enjoy a blessed hope of forgiveness and acceptance, infinitely preferable to the highest pleasures of sin. But persons of confirmed goodness have a peace within their breasts, *which passeth all understanding* (Phil. iv. 7.) of those who have not experienced it, and all description of those who have. They feel no tormenting remorse, no disquieting dread of God or man. They are never agitated by malice or envy: seldom, and but gently, moved by anger. Pity indeed they often experience; but gratifying it comforts both others and themselves. Their behaviour is friendly, and therefore agreeable: their discourse lively, if nature hath qualified them for it; but at least inoffensive and conciliating. Their hearts are open; in a proper degree, to all the innocent amusements of life, and they long for none of the prohibited ones. Virtuous discretion preserves their health and spirits as much as wordly uncertainties permit, makes their circumstances easy, their families and

dependants orderly and happy. Their judicious beneficence is very useful, their blameless example yet more. Thus they become blessings within the compass of their sphere; and surely reap no little joy from the esteem of others, but unspeakably more from the testimony of their own consciences. The best of them indeed are sensible of many failings: but all consistent with that sincerity, which God, they know, will recompence. They see through the whole course of life, that they are in the only right way; and whatever may happen to them, all will end well. Disappointments, unkindness, ingratitude, losses of friends or of fortune, necessity, pain, sickness, and death, *work together for their good* (Rom. viii. 28.), and unite to form an infallible plan for increasing their final felicity. Never will society grow gloomy, but inexpressibly the cheerfuller, for being composed of such persons as these; and such ought the religious naturally to be.

Therefore you, who are truly religious, appear in character, and do credit to your cause. Despise with good humour and pity the impotent ridicule of the inconsiderate: let the world see that you are happy, and that your belief in God is the ground of it. Wear no dejected looks, put on no forbidding appearances; be affable, be courteous, be joyful. Avoid improper amusements; guard against fondness for those in which occasionally you may do well to join: but express a decent and modest, a mild and compassionate, not an angry or censorious, disapprobation of the common excesses in them; shew that you can relish life perfectly well without them, by engaging with alacrity in the proper business of your station, improving yourselves, and doing good to others. Never unseasonably magnify in talk, but assiduously demonstrate in fact, the comfort you have in observing the precepts and expecting the rewards of the gospel. Manifest, whenever opportunities present themselves, yet without any ostentation, the benevolent serenity, which Christian faith inspires, your enjoyment both of conversation and

solitude in their seasons, your composure under doubts and uncertainties, your fortitude under crosses and afflictions, and your settled persuasion, that you shall ever be enabled to *possess your soul in gladness of heart* (Luke, xxi. 19. Acts, ii. 46.) and rejoice in the Lord *alwa*. (Phil. iv. 4.)

Such behaviour will surely convince even the vicious and the prejudiced, if they have any reflection, that to seek their own advantage with success, they must seek the things which are *Jesus Christ's*. And if they ever intend it, the present time is always the best; but this present time is peculiarly so. Decency prohibits now the usual diversions: apply your vacant hours to a better purpose. The offices of the week throughout express, in the most affecting manner, what your gracious Redeemer hath done and suffered for you: think deliberately in it, what you ought to do for him, indeed for yourselves. Think what you have been, and are, and what the faith you profess requires you to be; consider what fatal consequences will follow, perhaps very soon, if you neglect to amend, and how you shall accomplish this necessary work. Read with reverence the rules and declarations of God's word; read with attention other awakening, yet prudent books, reflecting as you go along; and engage some pious, but judicious friend, to excite, support, direct, and, if there be occasion, restrain you. Form discreetly by their helps needful resolutions; and beg earnestly of God strength to fulfil them: else they will all prove ineffectual. But remember, that the piety of the week, however strict, is not to end with it; and cannot be really Christian, if it doth. You are called to recollection now, that you may practise vigilance all the rest of your days. Temporary, periodical goodness, that is *like the morning cloud, and as the early dew goeth away* (Hos. vi. 4.), will be of no avail to any one; but they, who, *by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, are secure of obtaining eternal life.* (Rom. ii. 7.)

SERMON XCIII.

On false Grounds of Self-Complacency.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

WE must have some foundation, real or imagined, for thinking well of ourselves or our condition; or we must be wretched. And innumerable are the methods which men take to procure the esteem of their own minds. Too many *glory in their shame* (Phil. iii. 19.); are proud of notions and discourses, which misrepresent sacred truths, degrade human nature, and tend to dissolve human society; of gratifying their passions, their appetites, their fancies, whatever mischief it produces; of doing what visibly hurts, and must finally ruin their characters, their fortunes, their healths, their souls. Others value themselves on more plausible, yet insufficient, pretensions; on the lustre of an ancient family, which perhaps they disgrace; on the inheritance or acquisition of wealth which they employ to little or no good purpose; on agreeableness of person, which makes them vain and imprudent the short time it continues, and miserable when it decays; on liveliness of wit, which either provokes enemies, or invites dangerous friends; on depth of knowledge, often falsely so called, and pernicious, often wholly foreign, to their true business; on elegance of taste in smaller matters, while they are contemptibly injudicious in the greatest; on pomp and shew, which give a pleasure as fleeting as it is childish; on making a figure in the idle hurry of amusements, which encroaches on every valuable purpose of life, and wears out the spirits under pretence of raising them; on the favour of the great, by whatever arts attained, and however precarious; or on the seemingly more solid possession of power, which it is hard to abstain from using ill, and extremely hard to use

in a due measure well; which disoblige by the exercise of it many more than it can possibly oblige, is accompanied with perpetual fatigue and uneasiness, yet with perpetual envy; causes innumerable vexations while it lasts; and yet commonly grievous regret when it is gone.

If all these be wrong grounds of self-complacency, how few of us have right ones! There are those, however, who profess to build it on something more substantial, on virtue. But, alas! the virtue of great numbers consists almost wholly in specious words, honour, benevolence, good-nature, which are either a mere ornament of their talk, or influence their behaviour only on some occasions, or to some persons. And the more uniformly well inclined towards others are often strangely addicted to blameable indulgence of themselves: or, however, inoffensive otherwise, are lamentably defective in the discipline of the heart, particularly in forming it to that deep humility, which becomes dust and ashes. If we think too highly of ourselves, we shall be fatally misled: and, if we think reasonably, we shall experience the daily mortification of being faulty, more or less, even in those things for which we are applauded. Besides, our virtue itself will frequently oblige us to do what others will dislike, oppose, revenge. Or, though we escape such evils, yet the unavoidable ones of fear, sorrow, languor, pain, sickness, death, are usually more than enough to make our present state a pitiable, rather than a glorious one, if the consciousness of our own rectitude be our whole support under them.

Wiser men, therefore, in their search of comfort, look beyond themselves to God. And, indeed, faith in him, provided it represents him as a righteous governor, observing, distinguishing, and recompensing, unspeakably dignifies our condition, and adds importance to our prospects. But still, our best obedience being only his due, and paid only out of what we have received from him, we could neither boast nor merit, though it were perfect; and what his free goodness would bestow on us even then beyond security from their being sulleners on the whole, reason would never ascertain.

Or, were the innocent assured by it of

moral virtue, will suffice; and in the upper part of both, yet less of religion, if any at all, is needful. Accordingly many, who, from conscience, preserve some forms of it, rather look desirous to have them thought mere forms, and are wonderfully shy of uttering a word to shew the contrary; pass off any mention of their regard to it as slightly as may be, and are content to let others treat it with as much indignity as they will; instead of *glorifying in the cross of Christ, ashamed to confess him before men*, though he hath passed on that shame so awful a sentence (Matth. x. 32, 33. Mark, viii. 38. Luke, ix. 26. xii. 8, 9.); and perfectly indifferent whether pity hath the support, which they must know it wants, provided they can make an acceptable figure to those around them; a point about which they are as solicitous, as if the Apostle had said, *be ye conformed to this world, instead of, be ye not.* (Rom. xii. 2.) Perhaps the more seriously educated scruple going at once the utmost lengths of the mode in wrong things: but are gradually familiarized to follow their leaders from one step to another, till they advance imperceptibly to a frightful distance from their first setting out; and it may be at last grow ambitious of being leaders in their turn of a little world of their own, that shall tempt the great one into still worse enormities.

Through the whole of this giddy progress, innumerable attentions and incredibly earnest ones, to most insignificant matters, fill their hearts, and expel or deaden every devout and virtuous feeling. If they find leisure to reflect on their conduct, it is chiefly to invent excuses and palliations: if they still go to church, it is without desire of improving there: nay, if they still pray in private, which probably few of them continue long, it is little more than repeating thoughtlessly a few good words: and thus, by degrees, they come to have no real affection or veneration for their Creator, their Redeemer, their Sanctifier, no penitent sense of their own imperfections or transgressions, no practical or steady persuasion of future recompences; but form their whole manner of talking and judging, as if the present state were all: are

extremely eager about their worldly interests and pleasures, but equally unconcerned about the rightness of their dispositions; will on no account be absent from a meeting for business which they have at heart, or a gay assembly to which they are invited, let their health or what will suffer: but neglect the appointed seasons of divine worship, on the poorest pretences, or without any: crowd business, journeys, diversions, into the most sacred seasons, contrary to the excellent ends of their institution, contrary to all law, and all shame; but would think their reputations undone by going to the house of God at any unusual time, or even making with seriousness a momentary acknowledgment to him over their daily food: consult neither scripture nor reason to discover their duty; but make the artfullest use of either, to fence against what they are unwilling to own for such; or if need be, avowedly prefer the opinion and practice of the world to both: disdainful rebels against heaven, but mean spirited slaves to they scarcely know whom.

Yet most of them tolerate, and perhaps approve, some appearances of religion, especially in some persons; but suspect any great reality of it, as a degree of madness: have the utmost terrors of seeing this poor land over-run with enthusiasm and superstition; but not the smallest dread of profaneness, and profligateness: are startled at any new declarations of authority against either, but comforted by the hope, that they will prove ineffectual, and all go on as it did; read almost any thing written to depreciate christianity, and relax moral virtue, but almost nothing in favour of them; are very cautious of meddling with treatises of piety, however judiciously composed, for fear of turning their heads, but devour ever so many idle and even lascivious books, without the least apprehension of corrupting their hearts; allow themselves to be much more expensive in the vain-glorious display of private magnificence, or towards the support of entertainments called polite, though neither of good tendency or good taste, than liberal to the truest charities; or, how bountiful soever to the temporal distresses of their brethren, have no compassion at

all for their spiritual wants: nay, perhaps, have made formal resolutions of giving nothing to such and such pious uses, against which it is grown customary to inveigh, and hear no answer.

Yet many of them had originally no relish for this turn of thinking and acting: indeed still rather affect to seem, than really are, happy in it; nay, possibly feel tormenting doubts from time to time, how it will end. But these they are taught to consider as mere fit or gloominess, which they must dissipate by every mirthful avocation they can invent, and learn to despise themselves for ever, having been in so strange a state of mind, and so unsuitable to living in good company. Or, if reflexion will, notwithstanding, be troublesome, arguments must be sought for to quiet it. And accordingly they do argue, that men's stations, connections, and spirits require some relaxation, and they must take such as they can get, amongst those with whom it is to be had. But are they grieved or rejoiced at this pleaded obligation? Do they stop at the quantity or the kinds that are really needful, or go beyond them at pleasure? Are they growing better or worse all the while? Are they setting good examples or bad? Surely these are material questions. Yet they make a shift either to feel or to acknowledge nothing of their force; but whatever they like to join in, peremptorily insist, that it is harmless, useful, necessary, just what they please: yet reserving a liberty, when once it loses credit, to censure it as absurd and wrong every way, and be full as fond of something else, that deserves it as little, without confessing the least inconsistency.

For, with the world on their side, they come at length, instead of apologizing for themselves, to assume a sovereign authority over others, to refute their objections with barely a contemptuous laugh or look, or by fixing on them any name in vogue, that denotes preciseness; attack and persecute the most silent nonconformists to their notions, and haughtily overbear all that stand in their way. Such as worship the same idol with them, be their characters ever so doubtful, must not be suspected: be they ever so

notoriously criminal, must not be condemned; or counted unfit for their familiar acquaintance, or even particular friendship, let the consequences, private or public, be what they may. The pert ridiculers of religion and virtue are to be allowed abundance of wit in the silliest and grossest things they utter; and the more melancholly past times must be held mild; and of his present, because they wrote from a prison, is so if they turn attention to the supporting they are only rage is so affecting; and also, they are to that both he and they almost, it is well and conquer, is so noble and considerable; his deliberation, when regularly death be eligible, is so calm; objects of deference to live, even in their virtuous makes, and that of the good their conduct by heroic, yet fully engaged on account of it, and triumphant pleasure in its doctrines, its ornaments, its promises, and give any tokens of what the text calls *glorying in the cross of Christ*, they are to hope from this quarter for a very small share of the charitable candour, which is lavished so profusely on others. Their sincerity, or their understanding, is to be strongly questioned; their good dispositions and actions denied, or passed over in silence, or scornfully undervalued; ridiculous and dangerous singularities to be imputed to them, on the weakest evidence, or none; and if ever they fall into any such, they are to be aggravated beyond truth or credibility; and no plea whatever to be admitted in their favour. So very far are too many from answering the Psalmist's description of the man *who shall dwell in God's holy hill, that in his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord*, (Psal. xv. 1, 4.)

Even an infidel, were he to speak honestly, would tell such, that they are no christians. Yet, perhaps, they would be very agreeable with any one but an infidel for saying so, and in reality are by no means unbelievers. But why then will they not become consistent? If the gospel of Christ deserves any regard at all, it deserves a thorough regard; either it is nothing, or it is the most important of all things. And they who profess it, yet seldom think of it, who are influenced by

it, if at all, to scarce more than a little outward shew, and slight and scorn the frame of mind which it was intended to create in them, *better had it been for them, unless they amend, never to have known it.* (2 Pet. ii. 21.) All sorts of persons are concerned beyond expression to recollect this often; but sorts beyond the rest. If part of the world, will be full and most full of being exempted from the remarkable for not his laws; not of the pernicious will greatly in And if we others by afflictions on the earth, make them the reverse make it our study to acquire power, or rank, or wealth, or amusements and diversions in the poor low degree that for shame we can, or enjoy ourselves in some graver kind of voluptuous indolence; to do any thing, in short, but labour diligently in God's vineyard from first to last for the good of souls; we shall receive a double condemnation. And they who patronize any such of us, will share deeply in our guilt.

It is not rigour that dictates any of these assertions to me. It was not austerity, but the tenderest compassion, that moved St. Paul to say, *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things* (Phil. iii. 18, 19.); not always designed enemies, but real ones however. Our Saviour hath told us, *He that is not with me, is against me.* (Matth. xii. 30. Luke xi. 23.) And they that will be with him to effect, must be with him heartily, openly, and uniformly. We may have qualities very amiable, and do actions very laudable in the estimation of men, and yet our hearts be far from right in the sight of God. (Acts, viii. 21.) He requires, as well he may, that we should consider ourselves principally as his creatures, as sinners, as favoured with offers of mercy and of

grace, as bound to *live soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the blessed hope of his glorious appearance.* (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) However the preference, which the world gives to very different matters, may buoy us up now in overlooking these, it will be no protection to us, when the *dead, small and great, shall stand before God.* (Rev. xx. 12.) And however insipid or insupportable a life may appear to some, which is to be humbly in regulating their desires, doing duty, and expecting their reward; will find upon trial, that every other scheme produces miserable disappointments; and this, as much happiness as our present state is capable of. Length of days, easy circumstances, general esteem, domestic tranquillity, national good order and strength, are the smaller advantages that usually attend practising the rules of religion: but the constant ones, the calm peace and joyful prospects of all whose minds are daily affected by the genuine principles of it, these are blessings inexpressibly great.

You are not exhorted to begin a new course of life, and retain your old inclinations; making yourselves uneasy, without making yourselves better; but to acquire such sentiments, that you may delight in all you do. The vigorous exercise of good sense will contribute not a little to this desirable end; for, indeed, the ways of the world are often flat contradictions to it. But the fundamental rule is, learn a just value for the Cross of Christ, for the pity he hath shewn, the pardon he hath purchased, the felicity he hath provided for you; and you will soon come to love the restraints and observances which he hath appointed, to look with indifference, or sometimes with disgust and abhorrence, on what you have hitherto admired, and find the degree of your satisfactions unspeakably increased, by changing the nature of them from trifling, disgraceful, and noxious, to rational, noble and beneficent. Still difficulties there will be, and to some persons peculiar ones, in breaking settled habits, and dissolving the ties by which you have been long held. But God will give you both courage and prudence, to make it easier than you think. Though you will



do what is right with steadiness, yet you will do it without ostentation, and with cheerful good humour; speak mildly of others, and keep on as good terms with all men as you safely can. But, if you are too solicitous to please them, you will gradually slide back, and forget, as thousands have done to their eternal ruin, your former convictions. Therefore, whenever you feel any, suffer them not to die away through inattention, or be choaked by cares and pleasures, or blasted by the breath of scoffers; but impress them on your souls immediately and frequently, form resolutions corresponding to them, and confirm these by reading good books, by the conversation and countenance of good persons, by attendance on God's public ordinances; but especially by fervent private prayer, suited to your spiritual condition. With this, *out of weakness you will be made strong* (Heb. xi. 34.); and without this, the seemingly firmest human purposes, sink as highly of them as you will, can ever be effectual. *For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* (James, iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5.)

SERMON XCIV.

BY ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

 Summary of the Christian's Duty.

PHIL. iv. 8.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,  whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,  whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

As the excellent characters of the first believers and teachers of christianity are in general a strong commendation of it to mankind; so that of St. Paul in particular shines with distinguished lustre through his whole history; but especially his epistles, the faithful pictures of his soul. Even in this short one to the Philippians, it is surprising to observe, how great a variety of most exalted and engaging virtues he shews. The authority

of the apostle is so perfectly tempered with the condescension of the fellow-christian; the expressions of his tenderness for those to whom he writes are so endearing and instructive at the same time; his acknowledgement of their kindnesses to him, so equally full of dignity, humility, and disinterestedness; his mention of his past persecutions is so mild; and of his present danger, (for he wrote from a prison), is so cheerful; his attention to the supporting of their courage is so affecting; and his confidence, that both he and they should persevere and conquer, is so noble and yet so modest; his deliberation, whether life or death be eligible, is so calm; and his preference to live, even in misery, for their sakes, and that of the gospel, is so genuinely heroic, yet fully equalled by the composed and triumphant mention, which he elsewhere makes, of his approaching martyrdom; his zeal for propagating religion is so ardent, yet attended with so deep a concern, that it be indeed true religion; he is so earnest to guard them, both against a superstitious reliance on outward observances, and a licentious abuse of the doctrines of faith and grace; so solicitous to improve them in rational piety, and meek beneficent virtue; so intent to fix their minds on every thing worthy and amiable, and raise them above every thing gloomy or anxious; his warmth in this glorious cause, is so far from being affected or forced; and every expression so evidently flows from a heart, which cannot help overflowing; that, whoever shall read but this one epistle with attention and fairness, under all the disadvantages of a translation made word for word, and broken into short verses, will feel a strong impression on his mind, that the writer of it must have been an uncommonly great and good man; every way deserving of the high rank, which he claims, of a commissioned servant of God, and incapable of claiming it falsely.

But, besides being thus moved with the admirable spirit expressed, and the sublime precepts diffused throughout the whole, it will be still a new subject of esteem and wonder, to see the force and substance of them all collected at last into one brief exhortation; comprehend-

ing, in so narrow a space, the entire compass of virtuous dispositions, and right behaviour, as is done in the text; to which he subjoins with conscious boldness, appealing to all which *they had learned and received, and heard and seen of him* (Phil. iv. 9.), that this had been his own disposition and behaviour; yet humbly considers himself *as not having already attained or being already perfect*, but merely as *pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God* (Phil. iii. 13, 14.); and not only uses his own prayers but begs *theirs* also, that, *through the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ*, all things may turn to his salvation. (Phil. i. 19, 20.) We cannot help honouring such a character; but, if we hope to be the better for it, we must also imitate it. And therefore let us examine with this view, that description of it, which I have read to you. Had the several phrases, used in it, been as nearly as possible equivalent, and accumulated only to convey the intended meaning more fully and strongly, this would have been warranted by the example of the great Roman orator, who professes to have done the same thing on a like occasion. But there is a superior accuracy and beauty in the words of the apostle. Each of them singly hath a distinct sense; and joined together they form a connected and complete body of duty, as will appear by examining them separately; which I shall therefore do in the first place; and then, secondly, make a general observation upon the whole.

Truth, always present to the mind of God, is the ground of his commands; and, so far as discerned by us, is the ground of our obedience. On this accordingly the apostle here builds, and lays for the foundation of his whole superstructure, *whatsoever things are true*; that is, conformable to the clear perceptions of our understandings, the inward feelings of our hearts, the known circumstances of our situation. Setting out thus, he excludes, in the first word, from being any part of christian duty, every thing romantic and visionary, all refinements of false honour, all enthusiasm of a heated fancy. But he enjoins at the same time, whatever is reasonable and right; be the practice or notions of the

world as contrary to it as they will; whatever the sovereign principle of conscience dictates, though passions and appetites may draw powerfully another way; whatever the impartial state of any case requires, let vanity or interest make ever so much against it; what we owe to our Maker, no less than what is due to our fellow-creatures; what divine revelation teaches, no less than what human faculties discover; what the future, as well as the present condition of our being demands; for our relations to God are as real, and infinitely more important, than to man; those parts of his will which only scripture makes known, the authority of scripture being proved, are entitled to equal attention with those which reason dictates of itself; and such consequences of our actions, as will follow beyond the grave, are but a single and a short step more distant, than the visible and daily ones that follow them here. These maxims are the solid basis of proper conduct: the whole creation cannot shake them; and every other scheme of life is built upon the sand, and will crush us under its ruins. God himself proceeds invariably according to the reason of things; he must therefore expect man to hold it sacred; and both the honour of his government and the holiness of his nature stand engaged, that, sooner or later, every one shall find his account in observing this rule, but none in transgressing it. *For his righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and his law is the truth.* (Psalm cxxix. 142.)

The second head of the apostle's injunction is *whatsoever things are honest*; or rather, as the marginal translation hath it, *reasonable*, intitled to respect; for so the original word in the Greek expressly signifies, as indeed the word *honest* it self doth in the Latin tongue, from whence it is derived into ours.

If pursuant to the former direction, we consider, according to truth, the inward frame of our hearts and minds, we shall perceive, that, as man was created at first in the image of God, so there still remains in our nature, however defaced by the fall, a sense of dignity and worth, which we ought to reverence in ourselves and others. The lowest of men, with reason, think falsehood and dishonesty

beneath them; and the highest, if they condescend to use them, lose, by so doing, a much truer greatness than they retain. Worldly advantages leave the possessors of them but just the same men which they would have been without them. Personal accomplishments as often produce wrong conduct, hatred, contempt, and misery, as they do the contrary. At best, neither the one nor the other can give more, than a short-lived, and precarious distinction. But scorn of wickedness, and esteem of our duty, shewn in practice, this is the valuable pre-eminence, which will continue an ornament to us through every condition of life, through every period of our existence: will entitle us to inward veneration, as well as outward regard, and recommend us, not only to fallible beings, but to the unerring Searcher of our hearts, and final Rewarder of our deeds. Whoever therefore would obtain a truly honourable character, must preserve himself above dishonourable actions: and never permit either profit, or pleasure, or favour, or power, titular pre-eminences, or popular opinion, to debase him into doing any thing ill.

Keeping up this kind of superiority to the height carries no pride in it, no temptation to pride. For, though a worthy-minded man knows every thing to be mean, in comparison of right behaviour: yet he must know too, that his own behaviour is very imperfectly right, even in the sight of men, much more of God? and were it completely so, it would still amount to no more than his bounden duty. He will therefore always proceed with great humility, though with great steadiness, in the discharge of his conscience: patiently expecting, what he will certainly find, that many other things, and some of them very bad ones, will greatly outshine, in the eyes of the world, so plain and unpliant a qualification, as this, of uniform uprightness: which yet is indeed beyond all others the respectable one; the only ground of conscious self-approbation, of mutual esteem and trust, of public order and safety.

For however common it is become to treat all pretence of principle, as mere hypocrisy; and both to give with great

gaiety, and receive with great complacency, intimations, which one should think could do neither side much credit, as if interest or inclination would induce them, or any one, to do almost any thing; yet such general representations are both false in themselves, and pernicious to human society. The worst of men are not thoroughly bad, without some mixture of good. But nothing can go farther towards making all men so, than treating it as an acknowledged point, that they are so already, and cannot be otherwise. In proportion as this doctrine prevails, no guilt will be out of countenance. Now what the consequences of that must be, is easily discerned; and the prophet hath told us very plainly; *Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall.—At the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.* (Jer. vi. 15.) Undoubtedly the wickedness of mankind is great; and those in high stations have particular opportunities of seeing it in a strong light. But still, they, who feel any good qualities in themselves, cannot justly think there are none in others. And be there ever so little probity in the world, it is our most serious interest to cultivate and increase it. For what comfort, or what safety, can there be in the midst only of the profligate and abandoned! Or how shall either authority or merit support itself, if that inward reverence of duty and worth be worn out of the minds of men, without which all the solemnities of external forms will soon come to lose their influence? But if earthly tranquillity could be preserved by other means, yet heavenly happiness can be enjoyed only by souls exalted to a capacity of it; purged from every thing mean and base, and, by generous and honourable dispositions, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. i. 12.)

The third branch of the Apostle's exhortation, *whatsoever things are just, is* naturally connected with the second. Had we nothing superior in our nature to restrain us, force and fraud would be as allowable between man and man, as between brute and brute. But the con-

sciousness which we have of peculiar dignity, includes the obligation to mutual justice, as part of itself, and yet there was need to mention this part separately; because else, the higher the notion which each entertained of his own value, the more apt he might be to overlook others, especially his inferiors, and trample upon them carelessly. Therefore St. Paul, in the text, immediately subjects the mutual behaviour of all the sons of men to one common measure; and requires, that the highest and the lowest should each treat the other, as each might expect, were circumstances changed, the other should treat him; which single precept observed, would keep the world in quiet; and if it be transgressed, nothing is left to stop at, short of universal confusion. Every one therefore, in every part of social life, should be vigilant against the influence of pride, and passion, and interest; should inquire with diligence, and hear with candour, in order to judge with impartiality; should remember, that nothing is truly justice, but what is equity at the same time; should do frankly and immediately what he knows he ought to do; and so temper his prudence with innocence, as always to prefer harmlessness to worldly wisdom, whenever they interfere. That others will act very differently, is so much the worse for them; but no consideration for us to be moved by, in the least. The whole we have to be concerned for, is to act right ourselves. A wise and good God will take care of the rest.

Next to justice, the Apostle ranks, in the fourth place, a virtue equally flowing from the dignity of human nature, and seldom violated without grievous injustice, that of shunning the pollution of criminal pleasures, and practising *whatsoever things are pure*. Some kinds of sensual excess, as gluttony and drunkenness, are acknowledged to be contemptible, hateful vices. And however favourably too many look on the free indulgence of another appetite, at least in one sex, yet their opinion cannot alter the nature of things. Irregular gratifications can't still remain what they are, dishonourable to our reason, destructive to our happiness. And it is surprising, that they, who have any rightness of

mind, can fail either to discern or to reflect, what meanness it is to make these things the business of their being; and associate, for the sake of them, with the profligate and abandoned; what imprudence, to ruin or to hazard their healths, fortunes, or reputations, in such wretched courses; and what mischief, to destroy the virtue and peace of the innocent, and harden the guilty in their crimes; to violate faith and honour, distress families, embitter the nearest and tenderest relations of life, confound descents and inheritances, extend infamy, and perhaps diseases also, to successive generations. Indeed the sins of this kind have not always all these bad effects; but they undeniably produce in general, by innumerable ways, more thorough wickedness, and more exquisite misery, than almost any others. And even those transgressions of purity, that may seem the least hurtful, are so wrong in themselves, and so contrary to the good order, strength, and welfare, of society: they lead on so naturally to worse; they set so dangerous an example, and give so plausible an excuse to others, for going a little and a little farther in the same way (as indeed there is no possible ground to make a sure stand upon, if once we depart from strict virtue); that whoever considers, will be far from thinking, either the precepts, or the threatenings of scripture, on this head, too right and severe.

But abstaining from dishonourable, and injurious, and criminally sensual, actions, is by no means sufficient, unless we are careful to do becoming, beneficent, and engaging ones: or, in the apostle's words, *whatsoever things are lovely*; which class of duties he hath put in the fifth place with great propriety. For the good-nature and agreeableness, required under this head, is not to supply the room of the justice and purity required before; nor can possibly make amends for the want of them: but we must first resolve to be innocent, then study to be amiable. Now the two great branches of amiable conduct are those, on which the gospel hath laid so peculiar a stress; mildness in bearing injuries, and bounty in relieving necessities: One of them expressly made the condition of our being

forgiven; the other the foundation of our being rewarded.

But, besides these endearing virtues, the apostle undoubtedly designed to enjoin every other act of a generous and disinterested, a candid and sympathizing heart; every instance of gentleness to the faults, and condescension to the weaknesses, of men; moderation and humility in advantageous circumstances, and patient composedness in low and afflicted ones, every ornamental, as well as more substantial, duty of life; affability of conversation, obliging attentions, kind compliances; whatever will make our common journey through the world mutually comfortable and pleasing, without making it dangerous; and exhibit religion in its native cheerfulness, as a reasonable service paid to an infinitely good being: for all these things are comprehended under the character of lovely; and constitute a much more valuable part of christian practice, than many seem to be aware of. Indeed piety and virtue, however unpolished, deserve high esteem; and it would be a most unhappy mistake, to prefer superficial accomplishments before intrinsic worth. But still, both religion and morals, disguised under a forbidding look, appear so much less to advantage, than when they wear an inviting one; that we wrong our profession as well as ourselves, if we neglect to shew it in as much beauty as a modest simplicity will permit: and thus to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* (Tit. ii. 10.)

Nor is it enough to practise what we think right and worthy and becoming, but we ought further to respect, in a proper degree, what the rest of mankind esteem so. And therefore the Apostle adds in the sixth place, *whatsoever things are of good report*; and places this head after the others; because, if a competition arises, conscience is always to be preferred before common opinion. And indeed numberless are the poor wretches, who have been utterly ruined, by sacrificing at once their virtue and common sense to reigning sins and follies. Not that, in general, the public voice is nearly so favourable to wrong conduct, as some are willing to imagine. Al, who are not guilty of it, we may be sure will

disapprove it. Many who are, condemn it even in themselves. Nay, such as encourage others in it, often censure them for it severely notwithstanding. Or, was every bad man true to his own bad cause, yet both their weight, and even their number, is less considerable than they would have it thought. The gay and the loud, the bold and the forward, say the great and the noble, however they fill the eye, are by no means the whole of the world: but there is reason on many accounts to look beyond these; and inquire, what the serious and considerate, what the generality and bulk of mankind, whom it is neither modest nor prudent to despise, will think of our conduct: what hath been the judgment of time past on the like behaviour; what is likely to be the judgment of time to come; when we shall be spoken of without ceremony, and have the characters that we appear to deserve, indelibly fixed on us: a matter about which we cannot really be indifferent though we may affect it.

Nor ought the opinion of mankind only to assist in deterring us from what we know to be wrong; but restrain us from many things, that we possibly imagine very allowable. We may apprehend, perhaps, that such and such liberties have no harm in them. But if others, worthy of regard, apprehend they have; may not we be mistaken as easily as they? And is not the safer side the better? Or were we sure that we judge right, is there no deference owing, in point of decency, to the contrary judgment? especially if it be the general, the established one? Besides, may we not endanger duties of great importance, by destroying wantonly even the slighter outworks that defend them? May not our transgressing what is commonly esteemed sacred, lead some to esteem nothing sacred; and others to suspect that we esteem nothing so? Now this latter effect alone, or any thing that approaches towards it, would surely be very undesirable. And they, who have no concern what they are thought to be, are in danger of having but little concern what they do.

The apostle, having thus recommended every thing that we can discover to be a law of life, and every thing accounted

such by the wise and good, may seem now to have gone the utmost length that precept could go. But he had still one thing in reserve for the seventh and last place, to complete and crown the whole. Besides the constant obligations of all men, expressed hitherto; some, indeed most, on one occasion or another, are qualified for actions of distinguished excellence, transcending the common measures of duty. And though none should aim at what is beyond his strength, and all should first ground themselves thoroughly in things necessary before they aspire farther; and ever beware of doing the least evil, to bring about the greatest good; yet, these precautions being observed, *if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise*; any singular opportunity for exerting superior goodness, and acquiring proportionable honour; to this also the word of God, far from discountenancing an ambition so laudable, excites and encourages in the text. Here then every one is called forth, by the voice of Heaven, to every thing great and good, that shall at any time lie in his power; to serve his Creator, and benefit his fellow-creatures, the most eminently that he can, by all the means that his knowledge and wealth, his example and persuasion, his influence and authority, can furnish out. And *blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* (Matth. xxiv. 46. Luke, xii. 43.)

These then are the things on which the apostle directs us to think: and the general observation which I would make upon them, in the second place, is, that we cannot think of them in earnest, as enjoined by our religion, without honouring it highly, and being strongly moved by it to every part of right temper and right conduct. Such precepts evidently prove, that christianity is not a contrivance to make men, by faith in speculations, and exactness in observances, happy in another world, without being good in the present. Articles of belief, and institutions of worship, are instruments only proper indeed, and appointed ones; and we must never hope to be amended or accepted, unless we take the way to be so which God hath marked

out. But neither must we hope, that a formal use of the means will be sufficient, without serious care to attain the end. *Now the end of the commandment is charity, love to God and man, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned* (1 Tim. i. 5.); which words express the very same temper with those in the text.

If then these be the things which mankind have need to learn, and God expects; it should be remembered, that they are taught in perfection by the scripture revelation, and the methods of acquiring them too; that neither the one, nor the other, were ever taught without revelation, either generally or statedly; or without gross defects and errors; and that they who reject this way of instruction and worship, have not pretended to substitute any other; but shewn, by neglecting the commands, and transgressing the restraints of natural religion, that their disregard to christianity proceeds from bad motives; and will produce, in proportion as it increases and spreads, the very worst effects. Whoever, therefore, is indeed concerned for true virtue and moral piety, will affectionately esteem those incomparable lessons of each, which the gospel affords him; and whoever hath at all a due sense, how very often he hath violated, on one occasion or another, the dictates of both will rejoice from his heart in those assurances and means of forgiveness. For what is past, and assistance in what is to come, with which nothing but the gospel can bless him. For, however thoughtless offenders may flatter themselves, every considerate mind must see and feel, that sin deserves punishment, and repentance is not innocence; that pardon and grace are not debts, but voluntary favours; and God alone can inform his creatures with certainty, on what terms he will bestow them, and to what degree. Now he hath accordingly informed us, that only *faith in Christ, working by love, availeth any thing* (Gal. v. 6.), and that shall entitle us to every thing.

But then faith is not mere belief; nor is love mere admiration of the advantages and promises of the gospel; but being moved by these to an uniform practice of its laws is the single evidence, which

proves their genuineness ; and unhappily is the very attainment of which the generality of men fall short. Some there are who retain the name of christians, and seem to think it their due, though perhaps they scarce remember the time when they performed any one act of christian devotion, at least in private. On public worship it may be, or some part of it, they do attend sometimes, to save appearances, or in hope of entertainment, or from a confused notion of its being, they scarce know why, a duty ; but without the least conception, almost, of any further difference, between having religion, and having none. Others, that make a conscience, such as it is, of part of what they are commanded, have no regard at all to the rest ; but they will be pious without virtue, or virtuous without piety ; or they will chuse, just as they fancy which of the laws of either they will obey. Each they will not. Even the more trifling and seldom think of aspiring to eminence of goodness ; and they, who in many respects attain high perfection, often fail, most unhappily, of adding the beauty or holiness to the reality of it, by an amiable and obliging deportment and conversation. Thus it comes to pass, that some despise religion as useless ; and others are disgusted with it, as harsh and disagreeable ; that not a few of its professors will find it contribute only to their heavier condemnation ; and many of those who are entitled to reward will obtain a much inferior reward to what they might have done ; and all owing to the neglect of thinking, as they ought, on the important virtues recommended in the text. We give much attention to low and transitory things ; too much, it may be feared, to sinful and forbidden ones. We must know these excellent qualifications to be the worthiest objects of our thoughts ; why should they not also be the most constantly present to them ? But suppose they were, it is of no more use to think with speculative delight on the precepts, than the privileges of the gospel : but we must so consider both them and ourselves, as diligently to examine, and faithfully bring to account (for this the word *thinking* strictly denotes in the original) our duty and our practice under each article ; and compute the good-

ness of our condition, not by the state that we possess, either of the gay, or the solemn trifles, to which alone men commonly attend ; but solely by the result of this momentous inquiry, made with great impartiality, and with earnest prayer for the divine illumination. Nor will thinking on our spiritual state, merely enough to know it, benefit us ; without thinking effectually how to mend and improve it ; by imploring God's pardon for every thing wrong, and ascribing to his grace every thing right in us ; and asking and using his future assistance, to withstand all temptation, and increase in all goodness. *These things, therefore, think on and do : and the God of peace shall be with you.* (Phil. iv. 9.)

SERMON XCV.

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The Importance of a Religious Principle to personal Virtue and Happiness.

PSALM XXXVII. 31.

The law of his God is in his heart none of his steps shall slide.

AMONG those unhappy consequences, which disputes about religion are usually found to draw after them, this is none of the least considerable—that, whilst they unsettle the minds of many, and actually overthrow the faith of some, they too generally draw off the attention of others from what always ought to be the principal object of it. It is true, knowledge may, by this means, be increased ; so that most men shall become qualified, at least shall think themselves qualified, to discuss these points with skill and subtilty. But, I fear, we are too apt to rest here ; to consider religion as a matter of notion only and speculation, as calculated for the purposes of intellectual entertainment, rather than of vital improvement in virtue and holiness ; and, if so, our concern about religion ends where it ought only to begin ; whilst we make that the whole business of it, which

is, indeed no more than an introduction to it.

Religion has not always been thus treated: in the Psalmist's days particularly we find, it was thought worthy, not only to fill the heads, and to employ the tongues, but to warm the hearts, of its professors. *The mouth of the righteous man*, it seems, as opportunities offered themselves, was exercised in wisdom, and his tongue would be talking of judgment. (Psal. xxxvii. 30.) So much regard, he well knew, the importance of divine truths demanded from him. But then, (Matt. xii. 34.) *out of the abundance of the heart his mouth spake* on such occasions. Nor was his discourse only instructive, but his life unblameable, because his sense of religion was hearty and affectionate. *The law of his God was in his heart; therefore none of his steps did slide.*

And, however the professors of religion may be altered, the nature of things is still the same. The religion, which will ever be of real service in the regulation of our conduct, must still be, as it was then, seated in the heart. *Out of the heart are the issues of life*, (Prov. iv. 23.); and nothing will be able effectually to give motion and direction to our several powers, which does not first affect this main spring within us. In proportion as religion is or is not the ruling principle in the heart, its influence on men's whole outward behaviour will be powerful and prevailing, or weak only and precarious. When the law of his God is in a man's heart, then, and then only, *none of his steps shall slide.*

The words contain a short, but just, description of one principal ingredient in the upright man's character, and an engaging recommendation of it from its happy effect upon his conduct. And, in order to consider them as usefully as may be, I shall endeavour, in the plainest manner I can,

I. First, To shew, what is implied in the expression, "*The law of his God is in his heart*;" and, who is entitled to that character.

II. Secondly, To illustrate the beneficial influence of such a principle, here expressed by its preserving a man's step from sliding. And,

III. Thirdly, to subjoin an useful inference or two, resulting from the foregoing heads.

I. By the law of God, it is obvious to understand, in general, that rule of our actions which is bound upon our consciences by the authority of God, in what way soever the particulars of it come to our knowledge.

The heart is in Scripture variously used to signify the understanding, the memory, or the affections; and, according to any of these acceptations, the law of God may be said to be in the heart; indeed it must be so in each of them, fully to answer the character now before us. And,

1. To have the law of God in the heart, is to have it in the understanding; that is, not only to have a full conviction of the being of God, and proper notions of his attributes, but to be well acquainted, with his will and our own duty in the several branches of it. This is what the Psalmist elsewhere expresses, *by having understanding in the way of Godliness*, (Psal. ci. 2.); and, how necessary it is to have the law of God in the heart, in this sense of the word, previously to the others, is (I suppose) too evident to need any illustration. A due degree of knowledge in the nature and particulars of God's law is so necessary a preparative to the regular observance of it, that we can scarce take one step right without it. Nay, our very zeal, if not under the guidance of knowledge, instead of holding up our goings, will often be to us an occasion of falling. This point, therefore, must be first secured. And then,

2. We must have the law of God in the heart, as that stands for the thoughts and memory; that is, we must frequently call forth that knowledge, which is in the mind habitually, into its actual view and perception. This is what the Psalmist calls *meditating on the law of God*, and *exercising one's self in it* (Psal. i. 2.); and this he, with great reason, represents as being the good man's employment day and night. For, it is certain, vain will the most complete knowledge of God's will be, if not frequently brought to remembrance. Truth will ever be found to influence men's practice in proportion, not as it is known, but as it is attended to, by them. Temptations, when present,

will easily overpower such persuasions as are only habitual; and, in fact, more souls are destroyed for want of consideration, than for lack of knowledge. However,

3. The law of God, to have its proper efficacy, must not only be in the understanding and memory, but also in the love and affections; this is to have one's delight in the law of God; and is indeed the most proper sense of having it in the heart. It was thus the Psalmist was himself affected towards it, when, in the overflowing of his zeal, he cried out, *Oh, how I love thy law!* (Psal. cxix. 97.) And, again, *The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver.* (Ibid. 72.) We are informed by some, who profess to have an intimate acquaintance with human nature, that every man has some one favourite pursuit, some ruling passion, to which all others are only subordinate, and so, in case of interference, constantly give way. Now this, in the person I am describing, must be the law of God; that is, a regard to God's authority, a desire of pleasing, and a dread of offending him. *God's loving kindness is, to such a man, better than life itself* (Psal. lxxii. 3.); and nothing will be allowed to stand in competition with obedience to his commands.

Upon the whole; The man, that would be entitled to the character in my text, must neglect no opportunities of informing himself aright concerning the divine will and his own duty, which knowledge, when attained, he must not suffer to lie dormant within him, but must call it forth, into actual view, with frequency and seriousness, as a matter, not to be confined to the head, but to engage the heart; to be recollected and reviewed, not for the purposes only of speculation, but as a rule of conduct bound upon his conscience by the Author of his being, and the Disposer of his happiness; until the importance of God's law, and a regard to his authority, becomes a consideration always present with his mind, always uppermost there; a principle ruling in his heart, and effectually diffusing its vital influence over his whole life and conversation.

This, I conceive, is the import of *al.* expression, *the law of his God is in his*

heart; and such the person entitled to that character; the excellency of which, and the great reason and encouragement we have to aspire after it, may appear, by considering,

II. Secondly, the beneficial influence of such a principle, as here expressed by its preserving a man's step from sliding.

The expression is figurative; and may denote the security and the steadiness of a man's conduct: and, in both respects, the principle of an awful regard to the divine will is highly beneficial. It gives security from error, from sin, from misery; and it gives steadiness and consistency, and by that means self-complacency and dignity to the person possessed of it. All this a religious principle, seated in the heart, procures; generally, I mean, and for the most part, though not universally, or without exception; and that both by the blessing of God, and from its own natural tendency.

And, first, a sincerely devout frame of mind secures to us the above-mentioned advantages, by conciliating the blessing of Almighty God. How necessary the Divine favour is to the right ordering of our steps, every thinking man feels, and every ingenuous man will acknowledge. Accordingly, the book of Psalms (that invaluable treasure of the most exalted strains of rational piety) is every where full of petitions to this purpose. The royal Penman had in himself experienced the inability of man by his own wisdom to direct his steps, or by his own strength to preserve them from falling. Hence we find him continually imploring the Divine direction and support: *Order my steps in thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me!* (Psal. cxix. 133.) And, again, *Oh, hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not!* (Psal. xvii. 5.)

Now, if any thing may, by the light of nature, be known of God, or with certainty collected from thence concerning his methods of governing the moral world; of this we may be assured, that he will in a more especial manner favour and regard those of his children, whose (xiv.); are warmed with an affectionate for, we for the honour of his laws, and turned awe of his authority. We are

not, however, left to the deductions of our reason in this particular; God himself having, in his holy word, given us many explicit declarations to the same purpose; among which the following is introduced with a solemnity so remarkable, that, as I must not pass by it, so I need not add to it any other: *Thus saith the High and Lofly One, that inhabiteth eternity! whose name is Holy! I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit* (Isaiah lviii. 15.); and again, by the same Prophet, *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word!* (Isaiah lxvi. 6.)

But, farther; the temper of mind here recommended, is not only by God's promise entitled to receive, but has, in the course of his providence, an aptness to procure, the advantages above hinted at. And this you will now permit me to illustrate, a little more particularly, in regard to each of those advantages, in the order wherein I have already recited them:

1. To begin with that of security from error; and this both in matters wherein our belief, and those in which our practice, is concerned.

Where the principle of a true and rational piety has taken possession of the heart, error in religious matters, especially such as carries men to the lengths of schism, heresy, or infidelity, will not ordinarily find admittance. A man of this frame of mind proceeds in his inquiries with calmness and sedateness, with impartiality and freedom from prejudice, with modesty and humility. His understanding is well prepared for receiving the evidences of religion, or of any fundamental article of it: and his will has no reluctance, no objection, to admitting them. If in his progress he finds (as even a sincere inquirer may find) some things hard to be understood, he will not presently give up what is plain and evident, for the sake of what as yet may seem somewhat doubtful or difficult. Difficulties, he considers, must, from the nature of things, attend our religion, supposing it true; and these therefore he will by no means admit as proofs as it is not so. He will, however, by them, approach as more immediately re-

according to his abilities, whether the difficulties he meets with may not be surmounted by patience and attention; and, where his own abilities fail him; he will not refuse to call in all proper assistances; particularly those of persons, whom he has cause to presume, and is willing to believe, wiser than himself; and their's most especially, who are by God's own appointment, set apart for this purpose. The truth is, it is from half-thinking, not free-thinking, that dangerous error or infidelity commonly arises; as again, such half-thinking is generally occasioned by the want of an hearty desire to know and to do the will of God. Where the heart is not animated by the law of God, the man will probably exert just thought enough (and a very little thought will be sufficient) to raise a few doubts about our holy religion, without farther troubling himself to pursue them to any rational conclusion, or vouchsafing to seek for any solution of them from others: or, it may be, he has been far enough from home to have seen much hypocrisy or much bigotry under the profession of Christianity; and he will not be persuaded, but that every appearance of it is fairly resolvable into one or other of these principles: nay, if vanity or vicious prejudice strongly predominate in his constitution; he may perhaps be at the pains of working up such difficulties or such abuses in religion into formidable objections against it. But where sincere piety and a sound mind happily unite in conducting the important inquiry, the case is far otherwise: the arguments in favour of every divine institution will have their due weight, and those against it no more than their due weight: and then, we need neither be *ashamed of the gospel of Christ*: (Rom. i. 16.); nor afraid lest it should fail of approving itself, to such an enquirer, as being *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.); however its doctrines may, to the superficial or the conceited thinker, be a stumbling-block: and its precepts to the vicious and debauched liver, foolishness.

And, as this is generally found true of misconceptions in matters of faith, so is it no less applicable to errors of a moral nature. As it is less applicable to errors of a moral nature, so it is less applicable to errors of a moral nature. As it is less applicable to errors of a moral nature, so it is less applicable to errors of a moral nature.

late to the conduct of life. A sincere resolution to act agreeably to the law of God, is ordinarily one of the most faithful interpreters of it. It holds good in relation to practice, as well as belief, that *if any man will do God's will* (John, vii. 17.) or is ready and desirous to do it, he shall know of the action or undertaking; *whether it be of God or not*. He, who has the authority of God always uppermost upon his mind, and who resolves, at all hazards, to submit his actions to it, usually finds his duty lying plainly enough before him. Mistakes about practice generally arise from some perverse inclination, some impetuous desire, some *carnal affection not subject to the law of God*. (Rom. viii. 7.) These first make men deliberate about questions, which to an honest and good heart would have been no questions at all; and then hurry them on to a determination of the affected debate agreeably to the strength, not of evidence in the thing, but of inclination in themselves. Hence *the way of the wicked is said to be as darkness*; (Prov. iv. 19.) and the wicked are represented as *groping in the dark at noon-day* (Job, v. 14.) they perplex themselves in the clearest cases: and, no wonder; since, in this sense also, *they love darkness rather than light, because their intentions and desires are evil*. (Job, iii. 19.) On the contrary, the upright man sees his duty clearly, because he is willing to perform it conscientiously. *The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto a perfect day*. (Prov. iv. 18.) But,

Secondly, An affectionate and awful regard to the authority of God, is a most effectual preservative against sin and wickedness.

This is indeed a point so evident, that it will hardly admit of any illustration. Sin, in the very notion of it, is a transgression of God's law: and, it is certain, all wilful transgression of God's law must proceed, it not from a settled disbelief of his providence, at least from a present disregard of the important consequences of it. Accordingly, *My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly* (saith the Psalmist), *that there is no fear of God before his eyes*. (Psal. xxxvi. 1.) Into the want of this prin-

ciple he justly resolves all the vices and villanies of which men are guilty. And, in fact, where this principle is wanting, no sense of honour, no fear of disgrace, no dread of punishment, will be a sufficient security. But *the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*. (Psal. xix.) The fear of God will preserve a man's innocence, when nothing else can reach him. The darkness is no darkness, can promise no concealment, and is therefore no temptation, to that man, who has always upon his mind a prevailing sense of his presence, *to whom darkness and light are both alike*. (Psal. cxxxix. 12.) There is no engagement so pressing as not to allow time to ask this short question: *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* (Gen. xxxix. 9.) And this question, when properly attended to, must needs silence the most inviting solicitation. The enticements of pleasure, and even the dread of the most powerful human resentment, every allurement that can address itself to that part of our nature in which we are most weakly guarded, shall fall before this one consideration, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* (Gen. xxxix. 9.)

And, as a sincere principle of piety is a most powerful, so it is usually a most lasting, preservative against sin. Where a filial awe of the Divine Being, an hearty desire of obeying and pleasing him, and a prevailing fear of offending him, is deeply rooted in the soul, such a frame of mind, notwithstanding the depravity of our nature, is seldom completely lost. Overpowered indeed it may be for a time; but it generally, sooner or later, reasserts its dominion; and if, in the mean while, it cannot restrain the man from sin, it however makes his progress in it less easy and agreeable; and gives the overtures of divine grace a more advantageous influence upon the mind. Let *Jeroboam* (1 Kings, xiii. 4.) receive never so many awakening intimations of God's displeasure; let *his right hand be dried up, and the son of his bosom cut off in the flower of his age* (1 Kings, xiv.); yet all this shall be lost upon him; for, we read, *after this Jeroboam returned not from his evil way* (1 Kings,

xiii. 33.), but persisted in his impiety and idolatry. But, let *David* (2 Sam. xii. 13.) receive a seasonable reproof from a prophet, and he shall presently confess and lament his foul offence, and *offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart.* (Psal. li.) The cause of so remarkably different a reception of the divine chastisements was plainly this : David was, in the prevailing part of his character, a man of piety, one who had *the law of his God in his heart* : whilst Jeroboam appears to have been an entire stranger to *the power of godliness*, and only for secular purposes to have made use of the form of it. So true is the observation of Solomon in this sense also : the *just man* (Prov. xxiv. 16), he who has a right principle, *falleth seven times and riseth again ; but the wicked falleth into mischief* ; because he falleth without recovery. Which brings me to shew,

Thirdly, That an hearty regard to the law of God is the most secure preservative we can have against danger, disappointment, and misery.

I say, the most secure preservative ; because it must not be expected, in the present state of things, that piety itself should be found an infallible security against danger or disappointment, any more than against errors or failings. As *there are wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous ; so there are good men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked.* (Eccles. viii. 14.) And yet, notwithstanding this, there is great reason to believe, the real happiness of this life, though not always the seeming prosperity of it, is distributed among the sons of men with a more equitable hand than careless observers may be apt to imagine. And if, instead of forming our judgments from present appearances, we would *remember the end* (Eccles. vii. 36.), and take into our estimate the whole of God's dispensations towards particular persons, even in this life, we should more rarely judge or do amiss.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Prov. xiv. 12.) We often vainly flatter ourselves, we shall gain some favourite point, or avoid some dreaded mischief, by some more certain

and more compendious method than that which the law of God prescribes or allows of ; and possibly for some time all things may look fair and promising. But Infinite Wisdom hath innumerable ways of defeating our best-concerted projects, or even of rendering us, perhaps, still more unhappy by the present seeming success of them. *He that getteth riches and not by right (says the Prophet) shall leave them in the midst of his days ; and at his end shall be a fool.* (Jer. xvii. 11.) The same is true of every other acquisition. No sooner are we departed from the safe road of our duty, but we have put ourselves out of God's protection, and thrown ourselves at the mercy of every cross accident : hence disappointments and afflictions ; and these falling with double weight upon a mind, conscious of having brought them upon itself, and unsupported by the aids and comforts of religion, those only present helps in trouble. Whereas, so long as we continue in the plain path of God's commandments, we not only secure his favour, but engage the friendship of the valuable part of mankind ; we escape many interferences and rencounters with the passions and the vices of others, to which a deviation from duty would have exposed us : and, should any persons, without provocation given on our part, be ill-disposed towards us, they will scarcely, for their own sakes, venture to harm us so long as we are followers of that which is good. (1 Pet. iii. 13.) But (which is most considerable) if, after all, we should be permitted by Providence to fall into circumstances of seeming distress ; yet disappointments will lose much of their bitterness,* and even calamities of their pressure, whilst we are conscious of having secured his loving kindness who knows what is best for us ; and who is both able and willing to *make all things work together to us for good.* (Rom. viii. 28).

Such then is the security which a sincere principle of piety ordinarily gives a man : security from error, from sin, from misery. And it is equally conducive to the steadiness and consistency of his conduct ; for, in this sense also, *none of his steps shall slide.*

It is the Prophet's just observation,

that the wicked are as a troubled sea, when it cannot rest. (Isa. lviii. 20.) The various and opposite motives which successively, and not seldom at the same instant of time, agitate a mind destitute of religion, naturally create distraction in deliberating, diffidence in resolving, and inconstancy in acting. A man, in such a situation, is always dissatisfied, and therefore always uneasy; and, because always uneasy, ever unsettled. And accordingly we find him continually changing his measures; and, as the double-minded man in course must be, *unstable in all his ways.* (Jam. i. 8.) How different the case of that man, who has *the law of his God in his heart!* He has a plain rule and an honest mind, to direct the application of it. He first *ponders well the path of his goings, and then turneth not to the right-hand or to the left.* (Prov. iv. 26, 27.) He first takes due care to inform his judgment, and then pursues what that tells him is right, without deviation; as well knowing, what is right at one time must be right for ever in the same circumstances. He is steady without obstinacy; and proceeds with uniformity of conduct, because *with singleness of heart, fearing God.* (Col. iii. 22.)

The excellency of the principle now before us, in this respect, might easily be pursued through every relation, every station and condition of life. But never is its influence more seasonably exerted than in unquiet and intricate times; at such seasons, the man possessed of it, will not needlessly expose himself to danger; nor, where danger is unavoidable, will he refuse those succours which reason and prudence offer. But, then, he absolutely rejects all expedients inconsistent with God's law: and, after the use of fair and honest means, is not afraid to trust Providence with the issue. In the result, such a man generally extricates himself with more honour and more satisfaction, than any of those projectors who have not God in all their thoughts; and, whilst these latter *kindling a fire and compassing themselves with sparks, and for some time vainly walking in the light of their fire and in the sparks that they have kindled, shall lie down in sorrow* (Isai. i. 11.); *unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness* (Psal. cxii.

4.)—Light, to direct his steps; to cheer his heart, to clear up his innocence, and to make his just-dealing as the noon-day. (Psal. xxxvii. 6.)

And now, upon a view of the foregoing particulars, we may see the justness of the Psalmist's declaration, *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee! in whose heart are thy ways!* (Psal. lxxxiv. 3.) and the great reason each of us hath to implore the divine grace in his language, *Oh, knit my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name.* (Psal. lxxxvi. 11.) But I hasten, as was proposed,

III. Thirdly and lastly, To subjoin an inference or two, arising from what has been said.

And, in the first place, you will, from what has appeared, readily infer with me, the great usefulness and importance of a good education of youth.

We have seen, what advantages arise from having the law of God in the understanding, the memory, and the affections. But at no season of life can this great point be so well secured as in tender years. It is then truths of a moral or religious nature find their way most easily into the understanding, make the deepest impression in the memory, and take the most lasting hold of the affections. It is then good principles are most readily acquired; and principles then acquired are least liable to be overpowered or lost.

It is one great misfortune in man's present constitution, that he has not only a law in his members warring against the law in his mind (Rom. vii. 23.), but that this carnal principle has the advantage of first possession. The powers of the mind continue for some years in a kind of non-age, whilst those of sense and appetite are daily advancing to a considerable degree of strength and vigour; by which means these latter have often so far gained the ascendant, as to render it extremely difficult for reason and conscience ever afterwards to dispossess them. Now, an early good education is an excellent remedy against this inconvenience. Places of education are a kind of public repositories, from whence that observation and experience and justness of thought, which the young person has not of his own growth, is applied to

his use out of the common stock; and hence also, not only knowledge is dispensed to yet unfurnished minds, but restraint and discipline to appetites yet capable of being regulated by them. Hence, in short, the intellectual faculties receive proper assistance, whilst the sensitive are kept within their due bounds. Should this proceeding be called, instilling of prejudices: I see not any thing so very formidable in the charge. If youth be by nature in some degree prejudiced against virtue and goodness, and would be much more so by custom and example, what method can be better suited to the exigencies of our present condition, than that of seasonably counteracting those prejudices by others of a more salutary tendency, and more agreeable to the genuine and undepraved constitution of our minds; such as are calculated to restore our reason to its just pre-eminence, and to reinstate conscience in that dominion for which it was originally designed? Or, where can be the mighty harm of rescuing those souls from the snare of the devil, who would otherwise be taken captives by him at his will (2 Tim. ii. 26.); and of rendering them vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for their proper master's use, and prepared unto every good work? (2 Tim. ii. 21.)

Again: As we may from what has been said, observe the advantages of an early good education; so it is obvious to infer farther, what ought to be the principal aim and employment of it.

Wherewithal then should a young man be taught to cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself after God's word. (Psal. cxix. 9.) It is this, we have seen, which alone will be able to conduct us through the several stages of life with security and steadiness: this therefore is the point which ought always to be in the view both of teacher and learner. Other knowledge may undoubtedly be highly ornamental and highly useful, nay, to different persons in different degrees, highly necessary. But, after all, it is the fear of God that must cleanse our way, which must sanctify all our pursuits, and be both the beginning and end of whatever deserves the name of wisdom. Young minds must, therefore, by all means, be seasoned with an holy

awe and reverence for him that ought to be feared. If this necessary principle, this good seed (Comp. Matt. xiii. Mark. iv. Luke, viii.) be not sown in the heart now, it will scarcely ever after bring forth fruit unto perfection; it will either fall upon hearts already hardened by an habitual course of sin; or, however, the *cures of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the lusts of other things*, will be apt to spring up with it and choke it. But if it be sown early in the good ground (2 Kin. xxii. 19,) of a pure and tender heart, it will most probably rise in a plentiful harvest of exemplary virtue and holiness.

We have the force of an early piety remarkably exemplified in the case of Obadiah. He was governor of the house of Ahab (1 Kin. xviii. 3.); a king who had sold himself to work wickedness beyond all that were before him (1 Kin. xvi. 33. and xxi. 25.), and whose wife Jezebel seems to have had nothing so much at heart as the destruction of all the Lord's Prophets. (1 Kin. xviii. 4.) These were trying circumstances. For the first favourite of such a master, and the chief officer in such a court, notwithstanding his precarious situation, and (as it were) in despite of her displeasure on whose favour its continuance must have greatly depended,—to hide the Prophets of the Lord by fifty in a cave, and to feed them with bread and water. This was a proceeding not very reconcilable with the maxims of worldly policy. And yet, we cease to wonder at a conduct so uncommonly brave and generous, after himself has explained the true grounds of it, *I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth.* (1 Kin. xviii. 12.)

Once more: If the advantages of an early religious education are so great, what fruits may justly be expected, both by God and man, from those persons, who happily enjoy this inestimable benefit?

Need I remind you, how eminently many of us are concerned in this reflection? Whilst the far greatest part of mankind about us are continually busied in taking thought for their life what they shall eat and what they shall drink (Matt. vi. 31.), and procuring by the

sweat of their faces these necessary accommodations of it, we are, by our very situation, removed from the bodily labour, and in great measure from the distracting cares, of this world: we are at full liberty, nay by peculiar encouragements invited, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. vi. 33.); whilst not only by his general promise, but by special provisions for the same purpose, *all these things are added unto us.* But, farther:

Even those of our studies here, which may seem to have no direct tendency to form in us a religious principle, are however of great use, if rightly improved, in supporting and cherishing it. When we turn the eye of the understanding inward upon itself, the Divinity meets us in every thought, and calls upon us to adore that goodness, by which our minds as well as our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made. If we look abroad, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. (Psal. xix. 1.) Throughout all our researches into nature, we trace the footsteps of stupendous Wisdom and Majesty, obliging us to cry out with the Psalmist, *O Lord, how glorious are thy works! Thy thoughts are very deep?* (Psal. xcii. 5, 6.) And, should any among us be so brutish as not to consider this, yet the stated returns of our morning and evening sacrifice, and the laws by which you compel them to come in to the more immediate presence of their Creator and Preserver, their Redeemer and Sanctifier, can hardly fail of striking the minds of the most unthinking, with some degree of awe and veneration for that tremendous Being, who is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him. (Psal. lxxxix. 7.)

Let me add, in justice to these institutions, that lest our devotion should degenerate into superstition, or be overheated into enthusiasm, sound learning is here taught to go hand-in-hand with unaffected piety. Our devotion, not spoiled by vain philosophy, is here regulated by sober reason, and adorned by a due application to every branch of useful knowledge. Our holy religion is indeed all glorious within (Psal. xlv. 13.): but

she never appears with more gracefulness or dignity, than when the sciences are (as it is here best provided that they always shall be) *the virgins that be her fellows, and that bear her company.* (Psal. xlv. 14.)

What remains then, but that having these great and precious privileges (with which many others might be mentioned), we should improve them to the purposes for which they are given us, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* We expect, many of us (I suppose), shortly to be called forth, from these retirements, into a world, where we shall be sure to meet with a great variety of temptations and trials: and I need not now observe to you, how much will probably depend upon the preparation at first made for this most interesting conflict. Let us then lay hold on the opportunity we here enjoy, for taking to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. (Eph. iv.)

Upon the whole, then, and to conclude: The principle, which I have all along been inculcating and recommending, by explaining its nature and illustrating its usefulness, is that of an awful and affectionate regard to the law and authority of Almighty God. And that this important principle may have its perfect work upon every one of us, let us always bear in mind, that we are every moment under the inspection of God's all-seeing eye: that *there is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it altogether; not a thought within our breast, but he understandeth it long before* (Psal. xvi. 8.): he at present marks all our steps, so he will hereafter call us to an impartial account, and assign us our portion of everlasting happiness or endless torment, according to the righteous judgment which shall then be passed upon them.—These truths let us remember, not in general only and historically, as positions to which we yield a merely speculative assent, and which we can upon occasion demonstrate to others; but let us bring them home to our hearts and consciences, as truths of the most serious concern, of the last importance to us.—If this, like holy David, we set God always before us (Psal. xvi.

8.), like him, too, we shall not be moved. The apprehension of God's presence shall be the guard of our innocence and the support of our steps here; until the enjoyment of his presence shall be our exceeding great reward for evermore hereafter.

SERMON XCVI.

Importance of Religion to Civil Societies.

GENESIS, XX. 11.

And Abraham said, Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

THAT the general belief and public acknowledgment of those great principles of religion, the being of a God and his providence, are necessary to secure the order and happiness of civil societies, is an opinion confirmed by the united suffrage of the thinking part of mankind in all former ages. Not only the advocates for religion, after having established its truth, generally insist on its importance to men's social interests; but its very enemies have been forced to give us such accounts of its original and propagation, as plainly imply a confession, that the belief of it has always been thought necessary, to deceive mankind into a compliance with the rules of virtue, and a participation of the benefits of society.

This opinion, however, while suffered to keep possession, must needs be a considerable prejudice against all attempts in favour of irreligion. Accordingly, some of those, who, in this age of doubting, have discovered an inclination less favourable to religion, and every thing related to it, have (consistently enough) endeavoured to remove this obstruction. Hence, as it should seem, we have been entertained with calculations of the effects of theism, scepticism, and even atheism, upon moral goodness; and the same persons who have pleaded for subjecting the most sacred truths to the test of raillery and ridicule, have also proposed it as a problem, whether an atheist may not possibly be a man of virtue and merit? shewing a willingness at least to answer

it in the affirmative. And, should speculations of this kind be thought harmless amusements only of refined and contemplative heads, yet, our own observation, I fear, may but too fully convince us, that something more than amusement has been the consequence of them. Unconcernedness about religious principles, in general, seems to have been, for some time succeeding into the place of (what used to be accounted) a just abhorrence of infidelity and atheism. Our late pretenders to free-thinking have, indeed, for the most part, chosen avowedly to attack revealed religion only; and even in such their attempts the interests of the public may perhaps be found by no means slightly concerned. But it is well-known also, that the arguments they have generally employed for that purpose, are calculated to carry their deluded followers still farther. And there is great cause to believe, that those persons, whom such cavils are sufficient to remove from the faith of the gospel, very rarely stop short of a disbelief of, at least an indifference towards, all religion whatsoever.

It is therefore become but too seasonable, and will not, I trust, be thought wholly improper on this public and solemn occasion, to reconsider the subject above mentioned; to inquire, whether the general acknowledgment and influence of religious principles be really of so much importance to secure the morals and good order, and (which I will here suppose to be connected with these) the happiness, of societies, as has been commonly imagined? That, if it should, upon inquiry, appear to be so, we may reflect, before it be too late, what consequences may be justly apprehended, should a disregard for religion and things sacred make any farther advances amongst us.

The reasoning of the Patriarch in the text is, on many accounts, remarkable to the present purpose. Abraham appears, from this history of him (the antiquity of which, at least, our adversaries must give us leave to insist on) to have been one of the most illustrious personages in ancient times. By sojourning in several different countries, he had opportunities of making himself acquainted with the manners and sentiments of several different kinds of people; and this

too at a time, when the condition of mankind approached much nearer, than it has since done, to that state of nature, with which some late writers would be thought to be so familiarly conversant. And what was the result of the observations of a person so well qualified to make them with advantage? Why; that the fear of God is the only effectual check upon men's lusts and passions; and that, where any country is supposed destitute of the influences of this principle, there is no immorality, no villainy, no barbarity, which may not justly there be dreaded. This was the conclusion which the Patriarch drew from his acquaintance with mankind. From this he reasoned, and upon this he acted, as an unquestionable truth. *And Abraham said, Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.*

The fear of God, to which Abraham here supposed the people of Gerar to be strangers, must be understood to be the same principle, by which himself was actuated, and concerning which he had been, in an eminent manner, taught of God. We have, indeed, all the proof that such an affair will admit of, that the religion of all nations, when traced up to its original, was revealed. But it is evident, that the religion of Abraham was directly and immediately such. It will not, then, seem foreign to the import of my text, if occasion be taken from thence to represent to you, not only,

I. First, the importance of religious principles in general to national virtue and happiness; but,

II. Secondly, the excellency of those of revealed religion in particular to this purpose; and then,

III. Thirdly, Some of those useful inferences that most naturally result from the foregoing considerations.

I. First, then: The importance of religion to morality may be illustrated two ways: by inquiring, whether, on the supposition of no religion, there could be, in reason, any proper obligation to moral virtue? Or, whether, on the same supposition, there would be, in fact, any effectual inducement to it?

It will be little to our present purpose, to consider this point in the former view.

Whatever be determined concerning any supposed obliging power of moral considerations, separately from those of religion, yet the order and happiness of societies, I mean, as far as the natural tendency of things is concerned, are immediately affected, not by what men's behaviour ought to be, but by what it is in fact found to be. The most useful method of treating this point, therefore, seems to be to inquire, not how men's obligations, but how their actions, will be influenced by religion, or by the want of it. The inquiry is, by this means, brought from the bar of abstract reasoning to the more obvious and more convincing decision of fact and experience; and from considering, what has been hitherto observed concerning human nature, we shall be best able to judge, what may, at all times hereafter, in the same circumstances, be expected from it.

But here we meet with very different accounts, even among those who seem agreed in slighting the provisions of religion. If we will believe some great pretenders to a deep insight into these matters, man is a being by nature wild, unsociable, suspicious, treacherous, malevolent. Others, perhaps, out of an abhorrence of such a view of human nature, have given us representations of it very different from the foregoing one, and in some respects from those of each other; whilst some of them speak of man as if he were nothing but pure intelligence, solely conducted by truth and rectitude; and others, as if he were all good affection, sufficiently actuated by kind instincts, and a love of virtue, for virtue's sake.

The truth, I conceive, lies between the two opinions, which I will venture to call extremes. Human nature is neither so base and odious, a thing as the one would make us believe; nor will experience justify the flattering accounts given us of it by the other. Every good-natured man feels the injuriousness of the former representation; and we need go no farther than to such solemnities as these for a full confutation of the latter.

Man, considered in the views of mere philosophy (and in that manner only the persons we are here contending with will permit us to consider him), may be al-

lowed to be by nature endowed with such faculties as direct, and such dispositions as incline, him to associate with those of his own species; and to be, as by the former enabled, so by the latter excited, to promote the happiness of such associations, when made. But then it must be remembered, that these faculties, these dispositions, as far as they are natural to man, are faculties and dispositions only. To reduce them to acts, there must be willingness and choice; but to improve them into habits, care and cultivation are farther necessary. And, after all, should our discerning faculties prove liable to be obscured and perverted by powers of a different tendency, and our social affections to be checked and restrained by others of a private nature: it is plain, if we sit down contented with surveying only the bright side of human nature, and from contemplating what such a creature may be, conclude what he generally will be, we shall frame a very partial conception concerning that nature, and may find ourselves much disappointed in our expectations from it.

The suppositions I have been just hinting, are by no means merely imaginary. Let us leave our speculations, and follow man into common life, and we shall soon find each of them but too sadly verified. The first appearance that will offer itself to our view, may probably be that of the most useful faculties weakened, and the most generous affections overpowered, by craving appetites, impetuous lusts, and head-strong passions; and (which is still worse) perverted, and rendered subservient to purposes most prejudicial to public welfare. The avarice and ambition of some, the peevishness and resentfulness of others, the lasciviousness and lusts of still more, meeting with the like propensities in other men, would soon, if permitted to operate according to their natural tendencies, render this world a scene of confusion, distraction, and desolation. Man, when under the dominion of his passions, has ever been observed to be one of the most dangerous, most destructive of creatures. Even those very powers, which, when rightly applied, give him a just pre-eminence over the whole animal creation, serve only, under such a perverse management, to render

him more artful in contriving, and more successful in accomplishing, the most mischievous designs.

What is it then, which, at present, restrains mankind from these ravages, this destruction of each other? This is an inquiry, about which those persons are particularly concerned to give us some satisfaction, who imagine they can sufficiently provide for the government of the moral world (as some of their forefathers pretended to have done with regard to the natural), without taking into their schemes the belief of a God, and a Providence. And a variety of expedients will, no doubt, be assigned for this purpose. Great stress will be laid on the powers of reason; greater, still, on the more active principle of benevolence: and mighty things will, by others, be ascribed to a sense of honour: whilst those, who give us the most disadvantageous accounts of human nature, refer us, for a sufficient security of our persons and properties, to the dread of the civil Magistrate. Let us see, then, what might ordinarily be expected from any or all of these, should we be prevailed on to part with (what we have been used to account the foundation and support of each of them) the fear of God.

Reason, as far as it is a part of our nature, has already been observed to be a faculty only; and must, to make it serve to any good purpose, be carefully cultivated, and regularly employed. Give me leave, then, for once, to suppose this faculty to be thus cultivated, thus employed, without either setting out in its inquiries with a sense of religion, or arriving at the discovery in the progress of them. And what will be the result with regard to societies? Why, we are to expect many curious disquisitions upon the nature of a system; upon the proportion which the parts of such system bear to the whole; and, in short, upon the reasonableness; that each member of a community should refer his aims and pursuits, and even sacrifice his private advantage, to the general good. But, to speak freely, whatever may be said for a member of society's sacrificing his own private interests to those of the public, this must (I suppose) be understood of such private interests only, as make no

part of his ultimate happiness. For sure it must ever be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to persuade any man, at least on the foot of reason, to give up his own final interests for any consideration whatsoever. Whereas, without the supposition of a Deity, every good we are possessed of may be our ultimate good; every interest we can forego may prove our final interest. What a damp then must atheism, or even scepticism, cast upon all generous sentiments! How heavenly must all public designs proceed, when the conductors of them have not in all their thoughts that Being, who alone can, in case of present interference, bid self-love and social be finally the same.

But, in truth, we need not stay to inquire, what our rational faculties would direct, on the supposition before us. If the united ties of reason and religion are so unable to confine men possessed with the legion of disorderly affections, as we too often find them to be, how easily would men break the bonds of reason only in sunder! With how little concern would they cast away its cords from them! Indeed, who would, in this case, think it worth while to collect the dictates, or to hearken to the voice, of reason? Men that can be contented to have *no hope, to be without God in the world* (Eph. ii. 12.) must have anticipated the insensibility they expect for their final portion; or, however, they will, in course, soon abandon the care of the rational, and deliver themselves up to a merely animal life. Why should a man take much fruitless pains, to increase his sorrow by increasing his knowledge; or to cultivate a faculty, the improvement of which could, at best, serve only to render him more ingenious in disquieting himself in vain?

The truth is briefly this: The faculty of reason, when regularly consulted and faithfully followed, will always lead us to the acknowledgment of a Deity, and own itself to be his gift, *who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven* (Job. xxxv. 11.); and, when it does this, it comes most strongly recommended to self care and cultivation, our attention and reverence. But if, either out of

vicious prejudice exclude, or out of self-sufficiency affect an independence upon, the great principles of religion; the dictates of reason become uncertain and precarious; reason loses its dignity, its authority, and becomes a faculty, in every view, wholly unaccountable.

Benevolence is indeed a principle of a more active nature, and may perhaps be thought capable of supplying the deficiencies of reason with regard to social happiness. Not to enter into any dispute concerning the origin of benevolent affection, let us suppose it to be as natural and as universal, as is sometimes contended. Yet surely we need not prove, that men have other affections, equally natural and universal, and at least equally importunate for their respective gratifications. And whensoever the gratification of the former should interfere with that of these latter, as it frequently would in reality, and more frequently in appearance, we may appeal to experience to determine for us, what the result would generally be, were men actuated by no farther views, no higher principle. Or (which I would observe here once for all) should some few be disposed to hearken to the still small voice of nature in favour of the public; such a disposition could serve only to render its owners a more easy prey to the force or fraud of an infinitely greater number.

How unfriendly a disbelief of the principles of religion must be to public spirit, in the accounts of reason, has been already intimated: but the influence it would have directly and immediately on men's pursuits, and their very tempers, would probably be much more so. The active part of mankind would naturally put themselves under the conduct of the selfish and overbearing passions; whilst the more sedentary would deliver themselves up to gloom and melancholy, to spleen and sullenness. And how ill must every generous affection thrive in such a soil! We are surprised and shocked at the ingratitude and insolence of a *Nabal* (see Sam. xxv.) to his benefactor, applying for relief under the humble, and at the same time endearing appellation of his son *Daba*. But all this is fully accounted for many we read, that he was a man, ever be insensible of the obligation more also in-

to the comforts, of religion; and no wonder, then, if deaf also to all the demands of humanity.

With what different sentiments does a sense of religion inspire us towards our fellow-creatures? That we have all one Father; that our interests are alike in the hands of a most wise, most gracious Being? What calmness must such reflections speak to our breasts: what cheerfulness must that diffuse over our conduct towards those around us? Our gloomy thoughts, our melancholy apprehensions, are all now dispelled. Here is room and encouragement for every generous affection. Conscious of being continually under such a protection, we are no longer anxious about our private concerns; we can allow those of the public a just share in our regards. *None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself.* (Rom. xiv. 7.)

Honour, considered as a principle of action, consists in a sense of the dignity of our nature, and a resolution at all hazards to act up to it. An habit of mind, which, when conducted by reason, and supported by religion, will ever produce excellent fruits, and can hardly be too much encouraged: but, when it takes (as without religion it ever will take) popular and prevailing notions for the standard of what is agreeable to a man's dignity or character; this same habit of mind becomes a most capricious, and may be a most hurtful, principle; nor is there, in fact, any thing so ridiculous, or so destructive of public order, which our men of honour will not easily be reconciled to the commission of, nay, challenge applause for. So precarious will the morals, as well as the *faith*, of those persons always be found, *who receive honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh from God only.* (John, v. 44.)

And what is here observed with regard to particular persons, is equally observable of societies. We read of some nations, even in the heathen world, of whom many excellent things are related, as proceeding from a principle of honour and bravery of mind. But, upon enquiry, it will appear, that the beneficial give in this principle, if not the pre-^{whole}an, the principle itself, always such a pervers.

kept pace with the regard paid to religion. No sooner did any such nation fall into a dislike to retain *God in their knowledge* (Rom. i. 28.), but we find them presently given up to a reprobate mind, to do [*tu per subiectum*] things least agreeable to, most unworthy of, their nature.

The truth is, religion affords the only rational foundation for a sense of honour. If man be supposed, with regard to his whole being (and something like this the atheist, if he thinks at all, must suppose), *to come up like a flower, and be cut down again*, like a vegetable to blossom and flourish for a little while, and then to decay, wither, and sink into the ground from which he sprung: if he be supposed to come into this world by chance; to sojourn in it for a few years, as in a strange land; continually reminded of his defenceless condition, and not conscious of any superior protection; and, after a dull round of objects, which himself cannot relish, and of employments which he cannot but despise, to drop into nothing, as if he had never been? need I ask, what dignity there is in such a composition as this? No, certainly. We must be excused from expecting any great assistance to morality, any considerable services to the public from the honour of those persons, who own themselves to be of such an extraction, and are able to give us no better account whence they come, or whither they are going.

Civil government was the last expedient above-mentioned for securing mankind against the ill effects of each other's appetites and passions: and an expedient it undoubtedly is most beneficial, indeed in man's present state absolutely necessary, for that purpose. But it is as certain, that civil government always has called in the assistance of religion; and, in the nature of things, always must do so.

I insist not here on the atheist's giving us a satisfactory account of the first formation of civil societies; or on his clearing up the many suppositions he must make previously to that of any constitution of government at all. Let us suppose, with him, (without being too scrupulously inquisitive after the

time, place, manner, motives, &c.), that a great majority as the governed in every society must be, not insisting on their natural equality, have agreed to subject themselves to do, or at most a few, of their brethren. We ask, then, What shall secure, to the governed, the beneficial exercise of the power they have conveyed; and, to the governors, the firmness and continuance of the conveyance?—What shall engage the several members of the community to contribute their respective shares to the public weal? And, in short, what shall render government, in every respect, a real and general blessing?

We have seen, how insufficient the faculty of reason, and the principles of benevolence or honour, will always, of themselves, be in particular persons, to withstand the force of appetite and passion; and, we may well suppose, the addition of power will hardly diminish the force of those appetites and passions, which it gives an opportunity of gratifying. Exaltation and dominion have been always observed to be of an intoxicating nature. And, though government, under the most disadvantageous circumstances; may seem preferable to anarchy, yet governors, conscious of being armed with power, and not conscious of any superior being, from whom they derive, and to whom they are accountable for it, might render a nation sufficiently miserable: nor is there much room to hope, that they who fear not God, would, in such a situation, regard man.

Let us, however, suppose the governing part of the society, from whatever principle, heartily disposed to promote its welfare and prosperity; yet how shall they be secure of being supported in their authority? Or, without such security, how shall they proceed with a proper vigour in accomplishing the good ends of it? If a number of men be supposed to have devolved so much power, upon one or a few of their equals, as is requisite for their protection and the promotion of their interests; we need not doubt, but they will think themselves at liberty, at least, to resume that power, whensoever they do not, or (which will be a much more common case) whensoever they imagine they do not,

reap the advantages expected from it. And, whilst every little disappointment, every trivial grievance, every wanton desire of change, shall, by those who will be at once parties and judges in this case, be improved into a sufficient reason for insurrection and rebellion; how precarious must be the tenure by which any prince can hold his authority! How weak the hands of a good prince, in exerting it to any beneficial purpose! How vain must it be to expect, that those persons, who fear not God, should, on any steady principle, honour the king?

But supposing the relative obligations of governors and governed regularly adjusted, and all the security given of a mutual concurrence for the public good, that can be well imagined, still it remains to be considered, how the good ends of government itself should be pursued and accomplished? I would, on this occasion particularly, specify two of these ends; that of determining differences which shall arise about property; and that of guarding the members of the community against mutual invasions, by properly applying penal sanctions. Now, the dispensers of justice must, in many, if not all, cases of both kinds, determine upon such evidence as can be had only from the testimony of others: and yet, what security can they have of the veracity of such testimony, but upon a presumption, that the persons who give it are under the awe of a Being, from whom no secrets are hid? Without this presumption, courts of judicature cannot take one step with any satisfaction or assurance: an oath can give no security, can have no sense in it; and all judicial processes must become idle pomp, and trifling with solemnity.

Add to all this, that many practices, of a tendency very prejudicial to public welfare, are yet of such a nature, as exposes them not to the censure of human laws: the greatest crimes may often be transacted so secretly as to escape the knowledge, and the greatest criminals may sometimes be so numerous, or so powerful, as to defy the resentment of the magistrate. In all these cases, and many others, civil government must ever be unable to punish, and therefore also insufficient to restrain.

In short, without religion, it is hard to say what foundation there could be for any such mutual confidence among men, as is necessary to the support of government, the very being of society. Without supposing each other under the influence of this principle, every man might too justly be in perpetual fear of every other, who should be either stronger or more subtle than himself; so long as the one could think himself possessed of any thing, which the other might think it worth while to invade; or so long as the other could be supposed to have either lust or appetite, revenge, or even wantonness, to be gratified by infesting him. The apprehension that *every one, who should meet him would slay him* (Gen. iv. 14.), must in this state of things be the melancholy portion of every son of Adam; and all mankind might join in the complaint, *My punishment is greater than I can bear!* (Gen. iv. 15.)

But the Lord is king, the earth may be glad thereof! (Psal. xcvi. 1.) When we take into our account the general acknowledgment of a God, a providence, a future state; the face of the moral world is changed; society becomes practicable, and government a blessing. Where religious principles prevail, good kings may reign with security to themselves, and benefit to their people. Subordinate magistrates will know themselves to be under the strongest obligation, the most powerful engagement, to decree justice: and may proceed in doing so with cheerfulness, whilst those who give them information, or evidence, or verdict, are presumed to give it *in truth and right conscience, as seeing him who is invisible*. The peaceable and inoffensive subject will have all the security with regard to his person and property, that either a sense of an Almighty protection in his own breast, or the supposed awe of an Almighty vengeance in the breasts of other men, can possibly give him. Whilst those, who are disposed to be contentious and injurious, must, to come at the properties of others, break loose from all the ties of interest as well as conscience: they must, by giving disturbance to society, expose themselves not only to the wrath of the magistrate, but to a more inevitable, more dreadful, indignation: they must give up their own

most valuable interests, before they can allow themselves to invade those of other men; and become, in the strictest sense, fools, in order to be knaves.

Upon the whole; the remedies we have been considering are certainly, in conjunction with the fear of God, of no small benefit to societies. But, should we once set aside the supports and enforcements of religion, we should soon experience the insufficiency of all other preservatives of public order and happiness, and find reason to lament our having parted with the only effectual restraint upon those lusts and passions, *from whence come wars and fightings, confusion, and every evil work*. A restraint of universal extent, and only not irresistible efficacy, the influence whereof reaches to every relation, every office of life; which, like the great object of it, *is about our bed and about our path*; which follows us into the closest recesses, and *meets us in every thought*: a restraint, to the powerfulness of which the libertine and the atheist loudly bear testimony; the former, by making it his avowed quarrel with religion, and the latter, his boasted triumph upon a pretended conquest over it; but a restraint, to which we must have leave to glory in our professed subjection, as well knowing, that it debars us of no liberty but such as is destructive of public as well as private happiness; that it maintains the just authority of those parts only (both in the political system without us, and the moral one within us) which are fitted to govern; and requires the subordination of those only which are fitted to obey; and a restraint therefore, which we consider not as the invader, but as the guardian, of both social and personal freedom.

After all, I must not dissemble a material exception to what has been offered. The effects of a religious principle will, in course, depend much on the notions men entertain concerning the object of it. Thus, if the nature of the Deity be uncertain, or his will unknown, a morality consisting in an imitation of that nature, and an obedience to that will, must become imperfect and precarious in proportion. But, should the Deity be conceived to be a capricious and weak Being,

much more, an example and patron of treachery, debauchery, cruelty, &c.; such a corrupt religion (though in some respects preferable to no religion at all) must have an influence, but little favourable to the morals of its professors, or the interest of society.

How far the religion of the Gentile world is affected by this exception, those among ourselves who appear solicitous to reduce us to it, might do well to consider. In the mean time (blessed be God!) we Christians are prepared to give a full answer to it. And, for this purpose, I proceed to represent to you,

II. Secondly, The excellency of revealed religion in particular, for securing and promoting national virtue and happiness.

Not that I here presume to do justice to a subject so extensive; nor will any laboured illustration of it, I hope, be thought necessary: only, in reference to the foregoing suggestion, I cannot but observe, that our holy religion constantly sets forth the God, whom we fear, at once in the most amiable, and the most awful light: in his own nature, as a pure spirit (John, iv. 24.), every where present (Psal. cxxxix. 1—12.), having *all things naked and open to his view* (Heb. iv. 13.); *glorious in holiness* (Exod. xv. 11.) infinitely removed from all imperfection, all possibility of being so much as *tempted with evil* (Jam. i. 13.): in the exercise of his power, *as gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness* (Joel, ii. 13.); yet *as by no means willing to clear the guilty* (Exod. xxxiv. 7.): in his providence over states and kingdoms, as making their prosperity or adversity more visibly correspond with their piety or impiety; and towards all mankind in their private capacity, as having *appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness* (Acts, xvii. 31.): a day, in which he will completely rectify all the seeming irregularities in his present distributions; and *render to every man his final allotment of everlasting happiness, or eternal misery according to his deeds* (Rom. ii. 6.) The truth is, every season already given for the importance of religion in general to societies, has been an anticipation of the proof of the excellency of that reli-

gion, which alone, with any certainty, represents its adorable object as uniformly and unchangeably holy, and just, and good.

And, as revelation has furnished us with such excellent accounts of the Divine Nature, so has it made us, not less usefully, acquainted with our own. That the principles of our composition are at variance with each other, has been already supposed, and is too manifest from experience; but in the sacred writings alone we read the first occasion of this war between *the law in our members and the law of our minds* (Rom. vii. 23, 24.); which the natural man could no more account for, than he could deliver himself from it. And, as we here learn the true source, so here we are directed to the proper cure, of our degeneracy. Here every part of our nature that deserves to be strengthened, receives assistance, direction, and encouragement; at the same time that every corrupt and pernicious tendency is brought under all the discipline and restraint, that can be proper for, or indeed consistent with, our rational nature.

Is reason a faculty fitted to contribute any thing towards national virtue and happiness? But where do we find the native pre-eminence, the divine original, of this faculty so fully discovered; where its views so enlarged; where its genuine dictates recommended by so high an authority, or enforced by such powerful sanctions, as in the revelation vouchsafed us of his will, *who is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things?* (1 John, iii. 20.) Is benevolence a principle in any degree beneficial to civil societies? Let the Deist tell us, where every affection of the generous kind is so described in its properties, so exalted in its principle, so extended in its influence, so incited by examples, so animated by rewards, as in that holy commandment, *that divine institution, the end of which is charity?* (1 Tim. i. 5.) Is a sense of honour productive of any good effects to the public? the same revelation (Gen. i. 26, 27.) presents us with the most rational foundation for this principle, the only satisfactory account of the original dignity of our nature; and, when that dignity was in great measure lost, here,

and here only, we learn, what extraordinary methods have been, and still are, taken by every person in the ever-blessed Trinity, for advancing each part of our composition to yet greater dignity than that from which we fell. And, lastly, Is civil government an expedient necessary to preserve the order and happiness of mankind? But never was its origin explained; never its powers guarded from abuse on one hand, and from insult on the other; never its several good ends provided for, in so summary, so certain, and so authoritative a way, as by revelation; which informs us, without any tedious deduction, that *the powers that be, are ordained of God*; that *rulers are the ministers of God for good*; and that *we must needs be subject to them, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake.* (Rom. xiii. 1. 4, 5.)

But still more eminently does the excellency of our religion, and its usefulness to societies, display itself, in removing the chief cause of social as well as personal disorder; not by an idle attempt to extirpate our affections, but by first purifying and exalting them, and then placing before them objects most worthy of their pursuit. Are societies disturbed and the foundations of the political world put out of course, by men's intruding into the province, and impertinently censuring the conduct, of their superiors? Christianity calls home men's misapplied concern, bidding them *study to be quiet and to do their own business.* (1 Thess. iv. 11.) Are men's endeavours for the benefit of others and the service of the public, checked and restrained by an attention to private interest? Christianity alone has effectually, and against all casualities, reconciled these interfering tendencies: it has placed our kindness to others at once on the most generous and most rational foundation; teaching us to desire no present returns for our good offices, yet assuring us of an abundant recompence at the resurrection of the just. Are revengefulness and litigiousness productive of any ills to societies? *This wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated:* it banishes that *love of the world*, and that *pride of life*, which make our competitions degenerate into quarrels; which give keen-

ness to our resentments, and continuance to our enmity: it forbids not a due care for our temporal interests, nor debars us of any fair methods of recovering them when invaded; but, by extending our prospect into a far better country, and engaging our hopes and our hearts upon the treasures of that place, it scarce leaves room for a temptation *to fall out with our brethren by the way*; to enter into any great warmth, or to cherish any lasting hatred, on the account of any thing in this world.

From such an institution what assistance and encouragement must not morality receive; how friendly must it needs be, in its natural tendency, to the interests of civil societies? What could a lover of mankind more ardently wish for, than that such a religion should be every where received, every where obeyed?—But I hasten to suggest to you,

III. Thirdly and lastly, Some of those inferences which seem naturally to result from the foregoing considerations. And,

First, From what has been said it is obvious to infer, that magistrates and all that are intrusted with the care of public order and happiness, are, for that very end, highly concerned to support and encourage religion.

And here, by religion I understand, not only the internal belief of a God, and a providence, together with such affections of love, reverence, trust, &c. as that belief tends naturally to produce; but also those outward expressions of both in acts of social worship, by which I will presume a society of reasonable creatures, sensible of many common wants to be supplied, many common calamities to be averted, many common benefits to be acknowledged, would conclude it necessary to apply to their common Creator and Governor. That religion in the former sense, however it may be in its principle a personal matter, will ever in its effects greatly affect societies, has already appeared. But I would here observe farther, that even personal religion never did, never will, generally or considerably prevail, where some public profession of it is not regularly kept up; where the members of a community are not frequently called together to recognize the authority of the

Supreme Being, and to confirm their awful sense of his power, majesty, and goodness; by devout expressions of it: nor indeed can there well be a foundation for mutual trust and confidence among the members of a society, without some visible worship of Almighty God; by attending whereupon they may give each other satisfaction of their being under the influence of the same common principle. In short, both the internal principle and the external profession of religion are necessary, not only as branches of our duty to God, but to secure the natural good ends of religion to civil societies. For the promotion and support of each, therefore, every prudent as well as pious magistracy will think itself concerned to make a competent provision.

I must not stop here. It has been already intimated, how much the morals of a people may, and must suffer, from a corrupt religion, from unworthy notions or impure worship, of the Deity. Every reason, therefore, which can be given for the magistrate's supporting and encouraging any religion, will plead for his distinguished favour to such a religion, and such only, as is in its representations of the Divine Being, and of the methods of applying to him, pure and holy; and in its precepts and general tendency at once beneficial to the social and personal interests of mankind. How fully the Christian religion comes recommended to favour under each of these characters, even separately from that far superior title to reverence, which its divine original gives it, I need not now stay to illustrate. Let me only add, that, if among the several denominations of Christians, there be one, which has preserved the due medium, in its discipline, between tyranny and persecution on one hand, and licentiousness and anarchy on the other; in its doctrines, between such claims of infallibility as preclude all private judgment, and such latitude as would render a revelation insignificant for the purpose of a rule of faith; in its worship, between superstitious and idolatrous pomp, and a neglect of decency and order: if, in its professed principles, it be best fitted to promote public peace and happiness, and, in its external polity, best adapted to the

form of the civil constitution; and if, over and above all these, it be in other respects most conformable to the original standard, and to the usages of the best and purest ages of Christianity: such a society of Christians (we trust) will ever recommend itself to a wise and religious prince, as worthy of his first, and always his chief care. And we acknowledge it, with humble gratitude to Almighty God, and with all due thankfulness to those whom he hath set over us, that we, of the church of England, can with pleasure make the application.—But,

Secondly: We may farther infer, that all attempts to remove the influences of religion, or to set men loose from a sense of its sacred obligations, may be considered as so many attempts against public order and happiness, and be justly resented as such by the guardians of it.

I would not here be understood as desiring by this inference to subject all those to the magistrate's resentment; who may not, by the foregoing one, be recommended to his special favour. The subject before us leads me not to consider the case of a conscientious separation from the communion favoured by public wisdom; nor yet of such an opposition to the terms of that communion, as is consistent with public peace, and the inviolable regard due to religion in general, and to so excellent a religion as the Christian in particular. Thus much, indeed, is certain; that a wise government, jealous of all advances towards irreligion, will ever have a watchful eye upon all such disputes as, either on account of the matters debated, or the manner of debating them, appear to have a tendency that way. The case, however, which I have principally in view, is that of opposition, not to particular forms of church communion or establishments, under the acknowledgment of the same divine revelation; but to all church-communion, all establishments, all revealed religion; and yet, more especially, that of attempting to rob a nation of all sense of any religion, or (which amounts to the same thing) to deprive them of a religion, the good effects of which they have long experienced, without leaving them any determinate one to supply its place. This is an attempt directly and immediately

affecting the public welfare, and incapable of alleviation from any plea, either of conscience or charity; and is an attempt, therefore, against which every government is concerned to express a *perfect hatred, and to count the authors* (what indeed they are) *its own worst enemies*. (Psalm cxxxix. 22.)

The resentment here pleaded for will (no doubt) be called persecution, by those who are forward to deserve, but unwilling to suffer it. Let it, however, be called persecution for unrighteousness, for blasphemy, for avowed atheism; and for such persecution (if a defence of every thing sacred must be so called) no good man need be ashamed to plead. No man complains of the execution of the laws against robbers, perjured persons, murderers, &c. And, whether they who break one of these commandments, or they who teach men so—who remove from them the only effectual restraint from the worst of villanies, by instructing them to be under no apprehension of guilt, nor in cases of secrecy of any after-punishment, are more heinously criminal in themselves, or more extensively injurious to the public, can surely be no difficult matter to determine. But,

Thirdly: I beg leave to infer, that those persons, who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to the office of explaining and inculcating the great principles of religion, and have devoted their time and their labours to a continual attendance on this service, may reasonably expect to be considered, regarded, and supported, as useful members of the community.

Men may declaim plausibly upon the self-sufficiency of that reason which is common to all; it may be said, that the doctrines and duties of natural religion, and, in a country where the Scriptures are in every body's hands, those of revealed religion also, must be clearly discoverable by reason. And this kind of flattery will always be most greedily swallowed by those who are least entitled to it. But (to consider this matter impartially) by what reason are these things so clearly discoverable? Not, surely, by the reason of children, either in age or in understanding; but, by reason regularly cultivated, faithfully consulted, and

as faithfully followed. And of how small a part of mankind such reason as this will ordinarily be the portion, let experience determine. In fact, information and instruction are necessary to give mankind, in general, a proper acquaintance with those truths, which are of the utmost consequence to them. And even after the *good seed of the word is sown, and has taken root, the cares of this world*, the numerous concerns about which the greatest part of mankind ever have suffered, ever will suffer, their time and their thoughts to be almost wholly engaged, would soon *choak it and render it unfruitful*; were not the same watchful care employed in a continual cultivation of it. To speak freely; that a considerable part of our species does not degenerate into barbarians and savages, is in great measure owing to some such stated returns of attendance on the public worship of Almighty God, and of hearing his word explained and enforced, as we of this nation (happy, if we could but be made sensible of our happiness) enjoy. By the labours of a standing order of preachers (a privilege unknown to the Gentile world) *the bread from heaven falls*, as it were, *among our tents, even round about our habitation*. And, if we take into the account the more familiar methods of instructing the young and ignorant, advising the dissident, reproving the froward, encouraging the well-disposed, speaking satisfaction to the scrupulous, relief to the desponding, and peace to the departing soul; these are offices, which (it is hoped) will not fail to conciliate the friendship of every lover of mankind, to an order of men so usefully employed; if not on account of their divine institution, at least for their work's sake.

There is one consideration farther, which I take leave to mention under this article, and at this time. We have heard much of late of the spreading of popery in this kingdom; and it is a report, which cannot be received without concern by any lover of his country or his holy religion. But to what can this appearance be more probably ascribed, than to those suspicions and jealousies, which the more unlearned part of the laity have been taught to entertain for their proper

pastors, the parochial clergy? He must be a stranger among us, who knows not, what extravagant writings have of late years been published, and with what assiduity they have been dispersed; reproaching not only some scandals to the order, but the whole order in general; as mercenary and designing, as aiming at nothing but dominion and wealth, and as prosecuting an interest, not only distinct from, but opposite to, that of the rest of mankind. As to the justness of these general and undistinguishing accusations, the world must judge between us. But, methinks, patriots so watchful should consider, when such repeated invectives the people are worked up into a dislike and hatred of those, to whom not only the laws of Christ, but the laws of the land, direct them to apply in cases of doubt and difficulty; how almost unavoidably they must either throw off all regard for religion, or fall an easy and willing prey to those, who lie in wait to deceive; to those bold undertakers, especially, who are always at hand, ready to offer them a safe conduct, and to recommend their own delusive attempts with an appearance of great disinterestedness, and extraordinary sanctity. What numbers, especially among the unlearned and unstable, have been in this manner reconciled to the Romish communion, it is not perhaps easy to say. But thus much, I presume, we may collect (if any thing can be collected) from the experience of past times; that if ever popery is effectually kept out of this kingdom, this must be done, not by throwing down the fences of our present happy establishment, nor by alienating the affections of the people from those who are appointed to guard them from delusion (methods which must ever give the Romanists, as indeed they ever have given them, the advantages they most wish for against us), but by a steady adherence to that ecclesiastical constitution, which has always been the glory, and has, on many occasions, proved itself to be the bulwark of the reformation.

In short; if the interests of societies be at all concerned in the prevalence of religion in general, or the happiness of this nation in that of reformed religion in particular; it is as certain, that the credit

and beneficial effects of both these are closely connected with the reputation and influence of the persons that are appointed to teach them. A consideration, which must ever plead for a suitable regard and support to those teachers; as it is undoubtedly a most powerful engagement upon persons, in a situation of so great consequence, to *take heed unto themselves*. (1 Tim. iv. 16.) But to return:

The inference before us is manifestly extended, in the reason of it, to places set apart for training up the youth and growing hopes of the nation in the useful, the necessary, principles of virtue and religion. This indeed seems on all hands so well understood, as to need no illustration. The reproaches of them that reproach our excellent religion constantly fall on these societies, so happily formed for making early and successful impressions in favour of it; and as they are honoured with the same enemies, so (blessed be God) they can boast the same friends. The protection with which we are favoured with regard to our ancient privileges, and the encouragement given to our public works, are such honourable testimonies in our favour, as we acknowledge in *all places with all thankfulness*. May these illustrious seminaries always enjoy the friendship of the public; as I trust, they will ever continue to deserve it, by making the cultivation of learning and loyalty, of honour and virtue, and (for the sake of every thing amiable and praise-worthy) of the fear of God, their constant care.

Lastly, and to conclude: Let us all, as we would approve ourselves not only faithful servants of God, but hearty friends to our country, give all diligence, first to fix in our own minds, and then, as our stations and influence shall enable us, to propagate in the minds of others, a just sense of the truth as well as importance of our most holy religion.

Hitherto you have heard our religion recommended as of importance to the order and happiness of civil societies; and we hope, in this view, it appears entitled to protection and patronage from all that are in authority. But I must not conclude without observing, that we can go much farther in our recommen-

SERMON XCVII.

By the Rev. JOHN JORTIN, D.D.

On the Lord's Prayer.

LUKE xi. 1.

dation of it. We solicit not the favour of the great, or the protection of the powerful, from any distrust of our cause. The advocates for our faith have produced many convincing proofs, I doubt not to call them demonstrations, of its truth and certainty; such demonstrations as the nature of the subject will admit of, and such as are incomparably superior to those we scruple not to reason and act upon in any other part of conduct. And, if our religion be true (as most unquestionably it is), we are infinitely concerned to remember, that the consequences of our receiving and obeying it, how important soever they may be to us in our social capacity, are, with regard to our personal capacity, inconceivably more so; they will follow us into that world, where civil societies shall have no being; and will determine our condition in a state endless and unchangeable.

May we all then, from a rational conviction of the truth, and a constant sense of the obligations, of our holy religion, carefully and conscientiously discharge our respective duties in our several stations, *as to the Lord and not to men*. So shall the work of our country prosper in our hands, and we shall derive upon it the *blessedness of a people who have the Lord for their God*. (Psal. cxliv. 14.) And when all these associations, to which we here stand related, shall be dissolved; when *every one of us shall give an account of himself to God* (Rom. xiv. 12.) stript of all these marks of distinction which the ends of government now make necessary; such a diligent improvement, and religious application of our talents, to the glory of our Creator and the good of mankind, shall, through the merits of our Redeemer, secure to each of us that gracious sentence from our merciful Judge,—*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. (Matt. xxv. 21.)

And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.

IN the history of our Saviour's life, it may be observed, that ~~no~~ reasonable request was ever made to him, which he did not grant; and no prudent question, which he did not answer and resolve. Of all the requests which are recorded in the New Testament, this in the text may be accounted one of the most just and judicious; *Lord, teach us to pray*. The imperfection of the best, and the ignorance of the wisest is such, that if left so themselves, they would have doubts concerning the things to be asked, and the effects to be expected from their petitions. Therefore this disciple is greatly to be commended, who neglected not the opportunity of obtaining instruction in so important a point from the mouth of divine wisdom itself.

We learn from the gospel of St. Matthew, that our Saviour, before he delivered this form of prayer, discoursed to his disciples concerning the duty of private prayer, and exhorted them to avoid some faults relating to it. The Jewish hypocrites said their prayers in the streets and places of concourse, to be seen of men, to get the character of devout persons, and to promote their own worldly interests. The gentiles multiplied petitions for things temporal, without any devotion, without a due reverence and submission to the divine will. These indecent follies he strictly forbids: he reminds them, that God knoweth the things of which they have need, before they ask him: that they ought not to lay their wants before him in a superfluous abundance of words, nor hope to extort his favour by such absurd methods. Then he proceeds to give them a form of prayer.

It hath been observed by commentators, that this form is taken out of the Jewish liturgies; that our Lord collected it thence, and put it together, and added nothing of his own, except these words, *as we forgive them that trespass against us*; that therefore he was far from affecting novelty, and rejecting any thing that was good, because it was in common use.

If these Jewish forms of prayer are indeed as old as they are said to be, which is doubtful, another observation might be also made, namely, that our Lord, when he had recited this prayer to his disciples, knowing that there was only one expression in it which might seem new to them, makes a particular remark upon it, saying immediately; *for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

When our Lord gave this prayer to his disciples, it was not his intention that they should use no other than this in their private devotions, much less, that they should neglect the public worship of God, and the stated prayers of the church, to which, as it appears from the New Testament, both he and his disciples conformed. But the Jewish doctors had used to draw up a form of private prayer for themselves and for their disciples; and John the Baptist, as St. Luke occasionally informs us, had given one to his followers; and conformably to this custom of teachers, our Lord, at the request of his disciples, gave them this, to add to their petitions; for it is not to be supposed, that when they prayed to God, they always confined themselves to the Lord's prayer; and indeed our Saviour afterwards gave his disciples new directions concerning prayer, bidding them ask in his name.

But since our Lord ordered his disciples to make use of this form of words, as these expressions imply; so therefore pray ye; and, when ye pray, say; and since it is to be concluded that they complied with his precept, and repeated this prayer at certain times, the silence of the scriptures being no proof to the contrary; and since the church hath made use of it from very antient times; and since this

prayer is most excellent, as every christian must acknowledge; upon these accounts, and for the sake of him who gave it, it becomes us to insert it in our more solemn addresses, and also to account it a pattern and model for all our prayers, to ask for such things as are contained in it, and to make no petitions which are not consistent with it.

Some persons, who have been fond of extemporary prayers, have carried their aversion from stated forms so far as to slight even the Lord's prayer, and to shun the use of it. They have objected to us, the repetition of it in our liturgy; a repetition which, to say the plain truth, is too frequent. But that was not the fault of the compilers of the liturgy; it is to be ascribed to our joining together different services, which were originally intended to be used at different times, or hours.

The Lord's prayer begins with an address to God, as to our heavenly Father; and with three petitions, or rather pious wishes, that his name may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God is called Father, as he is our creator, and thereby the Father of all things in the universe, particularly of all intellectual beings, and of all men. Their Father he is, both because he made them, and because they in some measure resemble him. He is also Father, as he is the preserver of all, upholding and supporting them by his power and providence. He is also our Father, in a more excellent sense, by vocation and adoption, having called us to him by Jesus Christ, through faith in whom we become children of God, and are his family on earth, as the angels are his family in heaven.

By calling God, Father, we are reminded of his paternal readiness to hear our reasonable requests, to grant us the things which are good, though we may not have a right apprehension of them, and to withhold from us the things which are hurtful, if by mistake we should wish for them. Not only, if we ask ~~any~~ bread, he will not give us ~~any~~ bread; but if we ignorantly ask ~~any~~ which is in reality he will give us bread.

By calling him Father, we are reminded of that reverence for him, that fear of offending him, that desire of pleasing him, that zeal for his honour, that endeavour to resemble him, and that submission to his dispensations, which, as his children, we ought to entertain.

By calling him our Father, that is, our common parent, we learn what affection we ought to bear to our brethren, that is, to all men, who, as well as we, are his children by creation or adoption.

It is added, *who art in heaven*; an appellation of God frequently used by the Jews. Not as if God were there only, or so particularly there, as not to be equally every where in essence, in power, and in knowledge; but because his presence there is more gloriously manifested. By the same expression is also signified in scripture his perfect knowledge of every thing, his excellent majesty, his supreme, irresistible power, and his dominion over all.

Thus these first words, which are a preface to the prayer, are proper to produce in us worthy notions of God, and to raise our hope and reliance, our veneration and love.

By the name of God, which we wish may be hallowed, is meant the divine majesty, God himself, as he is known to us by his perfections. We may be said to hallow the name of God, that is, to sanctify or to glorify God, when we entertain in our hearts a right opinion of him, particularly of his moral perfections, as they are called, that is, of his perfect goodness, and justice, and purity, and mercy; and have a lively and lasting sense of them upon our minds, which produces a suitable behaviour towards him.

We sanctify him, when we declare this our belief, and acknowledge these perfections of God by speaking of him upon all proper occasions in such a manner as becomes us, and by offering up prayers and praises to him. We sanctify him, when our actions correspond with such thoughts and such expressions, and we obediently keep his commandments.

The kingdom of God may be taken in two senses:

1. A special and general dominion, which was cre-

ated for his pleasure, which is preserved by his providence, and which depends upon him for its continuance.

This cannot be the kingdom of God mentioned in the Lord's prayer, the coming of which we should desire; for it hath been present, from the beginning, in all times and in all places, and cannot be enlarged or diminished by the behaviour of any of his creatures. We cannot therefore pray or wish for its coming: we can indeed and we ought to rejoice that it is always present, that the Lord reigneth, and that his kingdom is over all, and that we are not exposed to the cruel tyranny of chance or fate, or of imperfect and wicked beings, but that all things are governed by an almighty and most gracious God.

Secondly, the kingdom of God means his government over rational creatures, to whom he gives laws, and who obey him, not by constraint, but freely and by choice. This kingdom may be resisted, and is daily resisted, by evil spirits, and by wicked men. And as this kingdom may be opposed, so it may be increased by the conversion of the disobedient from sin to righteousness.

As our Lord came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and to promote virtue and obedience to God, the religion of Christ and the state of the gospel is in the scripture frequently called the kingdom of God; and this is what is chiefly meant by it in the Lord's prayer. By praying, therefore, that God's kingdom may come, we express a desire that the gospel of Christ may spread and prevail over the world, may be every-where embraced and practised.

Thirdly, the kingdom of God in a more eminent and proper sense means that state to come, when sin and death shall be abolished, and the saints shall reign with God in glory and happiness for ever; that kingdom which they shall inherit who are subjects to the present kingdom of Christ, and obey his laws. The kingdom of God in the New Testament usually means both these kingdoms, for they are in some manner one and the same kingdom, and an entrance and continuance in the first leads us to an inheritance in the latter.

By praying then that God's kingdom may come, we pray also and wish for

that happy time when we shall have no more to do with this vain and wicked world; when the glorious kingdom of God shall come; new heavens and a new earth, the seat of everlasting peace and righteousness.

By the will of God is not meant what he purposes and resolves to do; for that he will do in heaven and on earth, whether his creatures approve of it or no. But the will of God, in this place, means his desire of being obeyed by rational and free beings, in whose power he leaves it to comply or not. This will of God is done in heaven by the holy angels, who are his ministers to do his pleasure, and who perform their duty to him readily and cheerfully. When we pray therefore that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, we wish that all men, imitating the blessed spirits above, may sincerely and carefully serve their Creator.

It is to be observed, that in the Lord's prayer we in the first place wish that the name of God may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; in all which there is nothing that relates directly, immediately, and particularly to our own persons. Hereby we are taught each of us to know and acknowledge ourselves to be what we are, a small and inconsiderable part of the creation; to place things in their true order, and to regulate our desires according to the dictates of reason. The honour and glory of Almighty God, who is the Creator, Father, and Preserver of all, is to be preferred to every thing else; therefore it is to be first sought and desired by us: the obedient behaviour of all his creatures, by which his honour is promoted and their happiness is secured and increased, stands next; and our own interest, though it be included in the good of the whole, of which we are a part, is not yet distinctly mentioned. But after we have prayed that God may be honoured by the obedience of all his creatures, we are permitted to offer up some petitions relating more immediately to ourselves, though not to ourselves alone; and they are, that God would give us our daily bread, that he would forgive us our trespasses, that he would not lead

us into temptation; and that he would deliver us from evil.

By bread is meant, not what disorderly fancy, and foolish custom, and pride, and luxury, and vanity may have made in a manner necessary to many of us; but those things which are really necessary for the support of human nature, those good things of this life, which God created for our use, and to be received with thanksgiving, those things which our heavenly Father knoweth to be needful for us, and which he hath promised to them who seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof. This is the bread which we are permitted to ask of God, and we must ask that he would give it us this day, or day by day, that is, not all at once such a quantity of things necessary as may last us our whole life, not treasures laid up for many years, but a constant and moderate provision dealt out to us in proportion to our exigencies, and sufficient to supply our necessities during this life.

This is a petition which it behoves us to put up constantly to God, how flourishing soever our circumstances may be, remembering the fickle state of worldly things, and the folly of placing our confidence in any creature, and the insufficiency of abundance, and power, and friends, and health, and diligence, and prudence, and the brightest abilities, without God's blessing, which is promised to those, who, whilst they are honestly industrious in their callings, rely entirely upon his paternal care and support.

The general sense then of the petition is plain; but the words, daily bread, are not so clear, and perhaps might be better rendered, to-morrow's bread: Give us this day bread for the morrow. This may, at first sight, seem to contradict the precept of our Saviour, wherein he bids us take no care for the morrow. But, first, the care which he condemns, is an anxious care, accompanied with a distrust of Providence; secondly, petitions, of their own nature, look forwards, and are for something to come; and thirdly, we only ask for bread from this day to the morrow, that is, bread for four and twenty hours, which is in reality only one day's bread.

By praying that God would forgive us our trespasses, we are reminded that we all of us offend him more or less, and in many things fall short of our duty; that yet we are sinners by our own fault, and must not charge our transgressions upon a fatal necessity, or a natural impossibility of doing better; that therefore our sins justly deserve punishment, unless God be pleased mercifully to remit that punishment; that he is placable and ready to be appeased upon our repentance; that we should daily desire his forgiveness; that our devotions should be founded on humility; and that when we pray to God for spiritual or temporal blessings, we ought at the same time to have a due sense of our own unworthiness, and meekly to acknowledge it.

Our Lord hath also taught us not to expect forgiveness, unless we forgive those who trespass against us; and this he hath repeated several times, lest we should deceive ourselves in a point so important. He obliges us to affirm before God, who knoweth our hearts, that we are in charity with all men, as often as we ask mercy from him; so that if we are not in this temper, we are reduced to the hard necessity and condition either of not offering up our prayers to God, or of indirectly asking him to punish us.

We must forgive those who trespass against us. And if we really forgive them, we must be free from designs and desires of revenging ourselves upon them; we must wish that they may repent and return to a better mind; we must be ready to do them such good offices as humanity and charity require, howsoever they be disposed towards us; and we must shew them still more favour, if they humbly own their fault, and amend, and seek to be reconciled.

Great is the encouragement which our Lord hath given us to practise this patient and compassionate virtue. *If ye forgive men, says he, their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* This promise, however, is not to be so extensively understood, as if this act of obedience alone could secure to us the favour of God, though we should neglect the rest of our duty. Thus much indeed may be justly hoped and fairly concluded, that he who hath received

considerable injuries, and from his heart forgives them, will probably by the good disposition of his own mind, and by the blessing and assistance of God, perform whatsoever is necessary to his improvement and salvation.

The next petition is, that God would not lead us into temptation; in which if we attend to the bare sound, and reflect not upon the sense of it, we may fall into unworthy notions of God's providence.

It is often said upon this subject, that temptations are of two sorts; first, trials of our obedience, intended for our benefit; secondly, enticements to sin, which seduce us from our duty. But this seems not to set the matter in a true light; the distinction is scarcely just. All temptations are of the same sort: they are difficulties which arise in certain circumstances and situations, when reason and duty require one thing, and inclination and passion suggest another. As to the event indeed, sometimes the man overcomes the temptation, and sometimes the temptation overcomes the man.

Concerning this expression, *Lead us not into temptation*, it is to be observed, that to be led into temptation, and to enter into temptation, in the language of the scriptures, signify to be overcome by it. When therefore we pray to God that he would not lead us into temptation, we desire that he would not place us in circumstances, wherein we shall be overcome by the temptation.

But as this may seem to make God the author and the cause of our sins, it must be always remembered that he cannot lead us into temptation by putting evil inclinations in us, or by inciting or enticing us to sin, or by laying us under a necessity of committing it, or by giving evil spirits any power over our will. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* But in the language of the scripture, whatsoever God permits to be done, or to come to pass, that he is sometimes said to do. He may then, according to this way of speech, be said to lead us into temptation, when, because we have abused his long suffering and his kind offers of assistance, or because we rashly seek danger through presump-

tion and self-conceit, or because our hearts are dead to things spiritual, he leaves us to ourselves, and withdraws that assistance which he would have continued to us, if we had asked him for it in a due manner, and done our part in working out our salvation. When such is our case, and we have forced God to forsake us, we shall as surely be overcome by temptation, as if God himself had led us into it, and subjected us to its influence. Therefore when we pray that God would not lead us into temptation, we beseech him that he would not suffer us, for the punishment of our sins, to be deprived of his aid, and to fall into circumstances which will prove destructive to us.

We pray that God would not lead us into temptation: we pray also that he would deliver us from evil, that is, from the evil of sin, which is the consequence of yielding to temptation: or, *deliver us from evil*, may mean, deliver us from the evil-one, from Satan. As the holy Spirit of God is ever willing to succour those who desire to be led by him, and to do the will of God, and as the angels are sent to minister to the righteous, and delight in the employment; so the scripture represents the evil-one as no less industrious to tempt, and to entice men to sin. However, all that Satan can do is only to tempt: he hath no power over our persons or our wills, nor can his allurements hurt, unless we by our own choice yield to them; so that the treachery of our own corrupt hearts is more dangerous than he, or any enemy from without.

The Lord's Prayer is closed with an acknowledgment of God, that his is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.

This doxology, or praise given to God, is not to be found in St. Luke's gospel, and it seems not to have been originally in the Lord's Prayer, as given us by St. Matthew. It is left out in our common prayer-book, in some places of the morning and evening services. It was used in the primitive church, and in ancient times, in their liturgy, when the Lord's Prayer was repeated, and at the conclusion of it, and thence it came to be annexed to it afterwards. However, as

it is entirely agreeable to the holy scriptures, both in words and in sense, we need not scruple to make use of it. It may be thus applied to the foregoing words:

We pray, O God, that thy kingdom may come, that thy name may be hallowed, and that thy will may be done on earth; for thine is the kingdom, to thee belongeth dominion, and it is the indispensable duty of all men to honour thee, and their happiness consists in obeying thy holy laws. We pray to thee for daily bread, for the necessities of life, for temporal blessings to be derived from thee the fountain of good, for the remission of sins through thy mercy, and for preservation from them for the time to come, through thy mighty protection; for thine is the power thus to supply our wants, and to keep us from all evil, and to pardon offences. For all these things we pray to thee; for if we do thus our duty to thee by hallowing thy name, and owning thy kingdom, and acting according to thy will, and if thou vouchsafe to pardon and protect us, thine will be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

By DOCTOR JORTIN.

On Industry.

2 THESS. iii. 8, 9.

Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and trouble night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow.

St. Paul found it expedient on many accounts to recommend industry in their worldly callings to the first christians. They who in those times received the gospel by their own free and deliberate choice, upon serious examination, having arrived first to years of discretion, who were convinced of its truth by the signs and wonders wrought to confirm it, who had been bred in Jewish superstition, or in pagan ignorance, and who were thus suddenly removed from darkness into

light, and from doubt and diffidence into full assurance; they, I say, had these considerable advantages over us, that they usually felt a more lively sense of the evidence and the importance of christianity, had brighter examples of goodness amongst them for their imitation, were more affected by the glorious promises of eternal happiness which were set before them, and looked with more indifference upon a world from which they had little to expect, besides scorn and reproach and malice and persecution.

But if their faith was accompanied with greater degrees of fervour than are commonly found amongst us, yet some inconveniences might arise even from that zeal. Piety, when it is not guided and governed by prudence, may degenerate till at last it becomes wild extravagance. A contempt for this world, and for all its concerns, may be carried too far; and St. Paul seems to have feared lest some should run into this extreme, and neglect to provide for themselves and their families, through a fanatical notion that a christian could have no leisure for such low occupations; and lest others, influenced by laziness, or by worse motives, should imitate them in this supine negligence.

For the apostles, and they who like them were then appointed to preach the gospel, had seldom leisure to labour in their worldly callings, and had a particular assurance from Christ that he would provide for them. This might mislead other christians to rely indiscreetly on the divine Providence, and to think that these promises were equally extended to them.

There seems besides to have been at that time a current opinion that the second coming of Christ, and the end of all earthly things, was at hand, which might have a bad effect upon some injudicious persons; and produce too much indolence and carelessness in worldly affairs.

The eminent liberality also of the first believers might prove a temptation to dishonest, sluggish, and insincere men (for such there have been in the church at all times) to indulge a lazy temper, and to live at the expence of those christian societies into which they had entered themselves.

Some of those heretics of the most ancient times, who are recorded in ecclesiastical history, were in all probability induced by no other motive outwardly to profess christianity, than by hopes of a share in the public collections; and accordingly, whensoever distress and persecution arose, and they had a near prospect of more danger than profit, they could easily secure themselves by deserting the church, and renouncing the faith.

Thus, unless proper care were taken to prevent this evil, the church, instead of being a society of honest, frugal, and diligent persons, able to maintain themselves and those who were proper objects of their charity, would have become a mere nest of drones.

St. Paul, therefore, as a pious and a prudent teacher, recommended industry to the christian world, not only by precept, but by example.

He himself on more than one account had a claim to a maintenance from the public.

As a preacher of the gospel and an apostle of Christ, he had a right by custom, by equity, and by the laws of God, to receive a subsistence from those whom he instructed, as he proves in his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

As he was the apostle of the gentiles, the care of many churches lay upon him, he had a much larger province than any of the apostles, he was obliged to labour more abundantly in the gospel than they, and therefore less able to spare time in labouring for a maintenance.

Add to this, that a small sum was sufficient for one man, and for a man who desired nothing besides food and raiment.

Yet he sometimes chose to waive even this privilege. *I have used, says he, none of these things, neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.* He chose rather to feed himself by his own toil and industry, by labouring night and day, because he would not eat any man's bread for nought. *I have coveted, says he, no man's silver or gold, or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have*

ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.

Such a person might boldly and earnestly press the observance of a duty which himself had so remarkably fulfilled; and indeed he lays a great stress upon it, and represents it as more important than some usually imagine it to be. If any one should neglect to provide for his own family, we should perhaps call him a careless, an indolent, an imprudent man: but St. Paul says, *If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

Study, says he, to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.

And again; *When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

Again; *Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

And in the text; *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not the power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.*

We may consider this example of St. Paul as a precept, first of industry in our worldly callings; secondly of industry in our religious concerns. Each of these duties I shall now endeavour to recommend, beginning with industry in our worldly callings.

1. If we hope to acquire what is necessary for our subsistence, to preserve it when we possess it, to provide for those who depend upon us, and to avoid gross and scandalous ignorance, labour of the body, or of the mind, or of both, must be undergone. I shall now endeavour to prove the truth of this assertion: it is generally known and acknowledged; and few have denied it. We read in ancient history of a sect of christians, who from those words of our Lord, *Labour not for the meat that perisheth*, concluded that they ought not to do any work to get

their bread. We may suppose that this sect did not last long, that these sluggards were soon starved out of the world, or rather that cold and hunger sharpened their wits, and taught them to be better interpreters of scripture. It may seem strange, and hardly credible to some persons, that there should have arisen such a sect as this: but daily and woful experience shews us that there is nothing so strange, nothing so senseless, which some men will not throw out, and which others will not swallow.

Industry in our worldly callings is necessary, because it is impossible to neglect it and to be obedient servants of God, as it may appear several ways.

Naked came we into this world, and destitute of all things which support and preserve life; naked also as to our minds, which at first are a mere blank, and have no knowledge. But the soul and the body are made and designed by their Creator, the one to improve in understanding, the other to increase in strength, and to be employed by the soul in a manner which may conduce to the welfare of both. Thus God by the voice of nature teacheth us that he designed us to be improvable and industrious beings.

To these deductions of reason the scriptures agree in many places. They tell us that God put the first man into the garden of Eden, to cultivate and embellish it. Afterwards, upon his transgression, it was told him that his work should be increased, and that in the sweat of his face he should eat his bread. *Great travel is created for every man*, says the author of Ecclesiasticus, *and a heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things.* This is very true; and yet so many advantages both to body and mind arise from labour, that it may be made a question whether the toil which God enjoined to Adam after his fall, and to his posterity, was a punishment or a favour. Certain it is that labour, if it was brought into the world by transgression, is one of the best preservatives against it; if it was the child of sin, it is the parent of virtue.

Again; God who hath made us incapable of subsisting by ourselves, and ob-

liged to our fellow creatures in part, for the things which we possess, teaches us by the voice of reason that we also in return ought to promote the welfare of others. Before we come to years of discretion, we have contracted a debt of gratitude to those who have educated us, and to the nation to which we belong. We cannot refuse to discharge it without great injustice, nor can we discharge it without industry in our callings.

The gospel strictly commands us to do good, to assist, to instruct, to direct, and to relieve. It commands us therefore what the idle person hath neither power nor inclination to perform. Laziness is always attended with ignorance, and usually produces poverty; and it is not to be expected that he who is so negligent of his own body and mind, should be servicable to others, and should love his neighbour more than himself.

Add to this, that in general whosoever is slothful in business, in his worldly concerns, will probably be a slothful christian too; for the same temper which disposes to the one, disposes to the other; and the same difficulties which deter a man from labouring to live creditably, will discourage him from striving to live religiously. It is the nature of idleness to hate to take pains, and of goodness to be active; and therefore there is little reason to hope that they should meet and dwell together.

Idleness is the parent of vice. He who hath some end, some innocent and honest end to pursue, and is constantly busy in contriving and executing what tends to it, and hath accustomed himself not only to labour but to delight in his calling, keeps beyond the reach of many temptations, or if they find him out, will often send them away, because he is not at leisure; but numberless are the temptations to which the sluggard is exposed, and by which he is continually assaulted.

His understanding is furnished with nothing good and useful, it pursues nothing steadily, it hath contracted an aversion from serious study and meditation: his imagination will therefore be restless, and rove in quest of one folly or other, for entertainment; for the soul is busy whether we will or no, it cannot cease from thought, design, and action,

of one sort or other, either useful or frivolous, either good or bad; and when it is not directed to that which is profitable, and tied down to some particular work, will grow wicked for want of employment. A vacant mind is a proper habitation for a devil: it is the house, which he cometh and findeth empty; then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there.

An idle person usually loaths his own company, for which indeed he is not much to be blamed. He cannot endure to converse with himself or with his betters. This drives him to contract unprofitable friendships, or rather acquaintances, for seldom is there friendship where there is no virtue. He seeks out those who are like himself, and whose time is a burden to them: he becomes a companion of mean and debauched persons; their bad qualities he soon imitates, and makes no small progress in vice, which is the only thing that he is disposed to learn.

An idle person, unless favoured by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, falls into want, and thence into wickedness; for he who through laziness becomes poor, is usually prepared for any mischief. When he is reduced to straits, then follows, What shall I do? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. But nature craves, and his wants are importunate: something he must do, and it must be something which is not laborious, and only requires lying, or forswearing, or cheating, or robbing, or some other vice.

Thus it appears that industry in our worldly affairs is a duty which God requires from us, that there is a closer connection between it and religion than we usually imagine, that it is impossible to live an idle life and a good life, and that he is really serving God, who is busy in his calling.

Another motive to diligence and industry is, that of all bad dispositions laziness is perhaps the most deceitful, and the most vexatious, and that in all honest labour there is much satisfaction. The love of ease and pleasure produces idleness; yet such is the nature of things, that idleness produceth neither ease nor pleasure, but the reverse. All men va-

lue the conveniences of life: the idle person takes the surest way to penury. All men love respect and reputation: the idle person is ever contemptible, because he is ever unserviceable and ignorant, an useless burden of the earth, salt that hath lost its savour, fit for nothing else than to be cast out and trodden under foot. All wish to have faithful friends upon whose good offices they may depend: the idle person very seldom finds such, and if he has them, he often loses them, because he hath no amiable qualities which may recommend him to them, and secure their esteem. All desire peace at home, and the love of those to whom they are nearly related: the idle person takes no care of his family, and can expect no affection there. All would unbend their minds sometimes, and rest a little from their labours: but the lazy person, who would perpetually amuse himself, is disappointed in that also, and tired and cloyed even with his diversions; for pleasure is no pleasure when it becomes the sole employment, and must be interrupted often and long by serious affairs, to become acceptable and entertaining.

The desire of the sluggard killeth him. He hath desires as strong as the most active and industrious ever feel, and indeed stronger, because he follows no business, an attention to which would drive out of his mind vain and foolish wishes. He desires wealth and pleasure, and honour and power, and the favour and esteem of the world. He desires that these things would come and seek him out, and offer themselves to him, without any endeavour exerted on his part to obtain them; and these desires are usually disappointed, and leave him to the vexation which arises from inconsistent affections. Then follow dissatisfaction, dislike of his condition, envy and hatred of those who surpass him in good qualities, and are in high esteem, of those whose labours are recompensed with success, and of those who, deservedly or undeservedly, possess the things which he covets.

These are vexations from which industry in our callings will secure us. It hath a tendency to preserve health of body and serenity of mind: it repays us with something that is grateful and useful.

In all prudent labour of the hands or the head some acquisition is made; we maintain ourselves, and are not burthensome to others; we get skill, dexterity, and experience, and so learn to do our work with less toil and trouble; we improve our understanding, and find out truths which more than reward the pains of seeking them.

By industry we obtain credit and reputation. Every one is willing to employ a diligent person, and whatsoever his condition be, he cannot be contemptible.

By industry we shut out many implacable enemies to our repose, many fretting desires, and sorrowful reflections, and turbulent passions, and violent temptations.

By industry we become beneficial to others, able to assist our friends, to relieve the poor, to instruct the ignorant, and to provide more especially for those whom God hath committed to our care.

Thus much concerning industry in our worldly callings.

II. Let us now pass on to diligence in religious affairs, in working out our salvation, to which we have the most pressing motives.

The shortness and uncertainty of life warns us not to neglect it; for since upon our present behaviour depends our future state; since the days of man are few, few according to the course of nature, and often made fewer by a thousand unforeseen accidents, it behoves us to lose no time, but to set about our duty instantly, to-day whilst it is called to-day.

The reward set before us excites us to it. We think it reasonable to labour for conveniences which are temporal, that is, uncertain and transitory; and this industry is commendable. Much more should we exert our utmost care and diligence in securing to ourselves the unchangeable favour of God, the society of saints and angels, and an endless happiness which shall be mixed with no sorrows and disappointments.

Gratitude moves us to it; to serve him, with all our power who hath done much for us, with whose benefits we are enclosed and surrounded, which way ever we cast our eyes and our thoughts.

The punishment allotted to the idle

and wicked servant calls us to it, to think no labour too great by which we may avoid the wrath to come. Infamy and reproach, and want and dependence appear in terrible forms to us, and to escape them we are willing, if we have any spirit, to labour incessantly, and to submit to the hardest toil. Fools and blind, if we perceive not that these are nothing, compared to the woe which must be the future portion of those who will not serve God here in this state of probation.

Our present interest invites us to it, to be most industrious in pursuing the welfare of our soul, which will procure us peace of mind, and the blessing of God even upon our worldly undertakings; whilst a neglect of our duty to him will be attended with fear and remorse, and give us an uneasiness which outward circumstances, however flourishing, will not be able to compose.

Such motives we have to religious industry. Every Christian will certainly allow them to have sufficient weight and force, and acknowledge that eternal life is desirable, and that it is an indispensable duty to serve God. But the illusion is this: We are inclined to think this duty so easy to be performed, that a very little diligence and caution will be sufficient.

Let us then consider what kind of expressions the sacred writers use, when they speak of our Christian duty. They exhort us to be rich and fruitful in every good work, to be ready to every good work, to be zealous of good works, to abound always in the work of the Lord, to pursue and work good towards all men, to exercise ourselves in godliness, and in the labour of charity, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, to continue patiently in well-doing, to see that we may obtain a prize, and to press towards the mark, to watch continually and be upon our guard, to give all diligence to add one virtue to another, to walk circumspectly, to watch incessantly, to prayer, to gird up the loins of our mind, to strive that we may enter in at the strait gate, to wrestle against principalities and powers, to take the kingdom of heaven by vio-

lence, to fight that we may receive a crown, and to war a good warfare, and to endure hardship as faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Thus the Scriptures tell us plainly, that without some labour we cannot be good. The difficulties with which the first Christians struggled were many and great; and difficulties of one kind or other will ever be arising. We are assaulted by importunate temptations; we often feel a propensity to go aside from our duty, and we are surrounded with bad examples, with multitudes who pursue their own destruction. When we reflect upon these things, we may perhaps be led into the other extreme, and suspect that the ways of righteousness must needs be disagreeable, and that the passage through them is tedious and painful.

But the Scriptures say that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness; and the word of God is true, and consistent with itself. That obedience is a labour, and that it is a pleasure, are equally certain. That these things are reconcilable will appear, if we consider that in all honourable and profitable employments, in all arts, in all studies, the beginnings are difficult, and the difficulties must be mastered by obstinate application. But many things contribute to lessen those difficulties daily, or to make us less sensible of them; as, a sprightly resolution, present profit, the hope of still greater advantages, experience and practice, and long custom, which is a second nature. Thus some, whom idle bystanders judge to lead a wretched and laborious life, are really most contented and pleased with their condition; for a man is just as miserable as he thinks himself, and if he delights in industry, industry to him is a diversion, and idleness is a toil.

So also is it in our religious concerns. The duty of a Christian is a laborious thing, especially to those who have bad dispositions to conquer, or particular difficulties to encounter; but when we do any thing good with labour, the labour passeth away, and the good remains: when we do any thing evil with pleasure, the pleasure passeth away, and the evil remains; and then custom making our

obedience habitual, an even temper, peace of mind, and many other present advantages springing from it, the hope not only of escaping future evil, but of obtaining everlasting life, and the divine assistance vouchsafed to us as far as it is needful, will by degrees make our inclinations join with our reason, and our duty become our delight.

SERMON XCIX.

By DOCTOR JORTIN.

On Contentment.

PHILIPP. iv. 11.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

If content ariseth from pleasure, and discontent from pain, and if the mind be exposed to receive impressions of pleasure and pain from the things which surround it, it seems to follow that content cannot be taught or learned, and that it depends not so much upon us, as upon the circumstances in which we are placed. But if there be pleasures which the mind can secure to itself, and if God hath made us capable of acquiring blessings which outward objects can neither give nor take away, the art of being contented may be learned, and this happy temper may be acquired.

There are many reasons for which we ought to be contented, and there are certain means, by the use of which we may learn to acquiesce in our condition, which I shall lay before you, after a few observations upon the nature of contentment.

1. There is no occasion to say much in its praise, and to persuade men that it deserves to be sought, and that they will find their account in it. Every one is desirous of it, and agrees in setting a just value upon it.

2. Some there are who possess all the necessities of life, and want no external helps to happiness, and yet are not satisfied, because their desires are extravagant and boundless. It would be a vain attempt to endeavour to teach such persons

contentment, who have so many things to learn, and so many to unlearn, before they can hear reason upon this head.

3. It is not necessary that he who is contented in his state, should prefer that state to any other, or should never use any endeavours to mend his condition. A person may be contented, who has not some of the conveniences of life, and who is seeking to acquire them: but then he will not be uneasy without them, or afflicted and dejected if he should meet with disappointments in his pursuits. If he can obtain them, they will be welcome to him; if he cannot, he will not be much disturbed about it.

4. Contentment, even in a prosperous situation, is a commendable quality, since it depends much upon goodness of heart, and a right temper of mind, and without them is not attainable in any condition: yet it must be confessed that when there is an affluence of all accommodations, it is no extraordinary accomplishment to be satisfied; so that this virtue is better tried, and appears to more advantage when we are deprived of the things which are generally valued, and might be innocently enjoyed. This is the contentment on which we propose to discourse. St. Paul says in the text, that he had learned to be contented in all states. And what state was his? The history of the Acts of the Apostles and his own Epistles will inform us, that it was a state which to the greater part of men would be very unacceptable and very irksome.

5. Contentment, as it is a virtue, may be said to belong chiefly to a condition which is not the easiest, nor yet the hardest and most wretched. In sore calamities and extreme misery, there is another virtue very nearly related to contentment, which seems to take place; namely, a patient resignation to the will of God, which hath in it every thing that is to be found in contentment, except cheerfulness.

6. Lastly, If every thing happens to us at present according to our desires, if God hath liberally poured down upon us temporal blessings, if we have friends, and health, and honour, and riches, and youth, yet we should study to acquire that most useful and excellent art of being

contented in every state, and of preserving an even temper of mind under any change of circumstances; for we know not how soon we may have occasion to practise this virtue, and we may be almost certain that such occasions will arise in the course of life, and in a state where nothing is of a fixed and permanent nature. Friends may die, and friendships may be dissolved, health may be soon and suddenly and irretrievably lost, promises may be broken, and kindnesses repaid with ingratitude, riches may make themselves wings, and take their flight, the favour of the world is uncertain, reputation is not always secured by innocence and desert, our best days steal silently and insensibly away, and others less agreeable succeed them.

I proceed now to offer some reasons for which we should be contented in our state, though it be exposed to inconveniences.

I. If we are uneasy, impatient, angry, vexed, envious, querulous, and dejected, because we have not this or that which we think suitable for us, we act most absurdly, we add to our misery, we afflict ourselves to no purpose, we are our own enemies. If all sin be folly, if every bad disposition be irrational, discontent is so in a more eminent manner.

A greater stress should not be laid upon this argument than it will bear, and therefore we must acknowledge that, considered by itself, and not seconded by other motives, it will hardly prove strong enough to calm a dissatisfied mind. And yet it hath its use, which is this: Since discontent is confessedly a very troublesome evil, which makes our condition worse than it would else be, the consideration of this should dispose us to use our utmost endeavours to overcome it, and patiently to listen to those arguments which may convince us of the wisdom and profitableness of the contrary temper.

II. Another motive to contentedness may be drawn from observations made upon the state of mankind, upon the evils and calamities with which this world at all times abounds. We cannot entertain a more foolish hope than to expect to be distinguished by a constant course of happiness from that cloud of sufferers

which surrounds us. We complain of our own hard lot, we repine at this or that inconvenience, whilst there are thousands, whose state is so far worse than ours, that they would think themselves happy if they might exchange their condition for that which we think so insupportable. We imagine, it may be, that we have many causes of discontent: we should look abroad a little, and see how it fares with the rest of mankind; and when we have done this, if we return home again and enter into ourselves, and consider our condition, we shall find that perhaps it is not so bad as it might have been, and that there is nothing uncommon in it.

This is an argument which heathen authors have very frequently used, and which they seem to have accounted one of the best. But it may be thought liable to a few objections.

First, it may be said that evils are not the less felt by us because we know that others also suffer them; and that the consideration of the calamities abounding in all times and places, of which every one must expect a share, is rather a motive to us to be willing to leave the world, than to be contented in it.

The objection is not material. To say that our evils are not alleviated from the consideration that they are common to mankind, is to cavil, and to contradict matter of fact, and the testimony of multitudes. And to the observation that reflections upon the troubles of life will rather incline us to dislike the world than to be contented in it; to that it may be replied, a moderate contempt of the world and contentment are not far asunder: repining and discontent arise from a violent affection for things here below; and a coldness towards them enables us to bear the diminution, the absence, or the loss of them the more calmly.

There remains another and a stronger objection, namely, that it is a spiteful and malicious comfort which is drawn from the sufferings of others, and a proof that we take pleasure in them, and would see none happier than ourselves.

The proper answer to it seems to be this: Evils of any sort are then most irksome to us when they come unexpected,

and surprise us unprepared to bear them. We then think our condition particularly hard, and ourselves singled out, as it were, by Providence to suffer more than others; and we persuade ourselves that any one would be as uneasy as we are. But observations upon the course of things will teach us to arm ourselves against disappointments, and not expect a settled prosperity; they will inform us of greater afflictions than in all probability we have known, and of many persons who have shewed an evenness of temper, and a calmness of mind, under circumstances as undesirable as ours, and who have made them light by bearing them decently. Such reflections surely may be made without any malignity, any satisfaction arising directly from the misfortunes or miseries of others. When we read or hear of great and good persons, adorned with useful and amiable accomplishments, overlooked and neglected by the world, exposed to poverty, losses, slights, censures, or other inconveniences, proceeding with patient serenity and mild composure, neither envying the fortunate, nor fawning upon the worthless, nor bemoaning themselves, nor repining, nor complaining; in contemplating these characters, we find instruction and relief, and pleasure too, a pleasure accompanied with no malevolence, but with the sincerest esteem for such persons. There is indeed such greatness and dignity in suffering virtue, that it can hardly excite our pity, which seems to give place to admiration and applause. Our Saviour, speaking of good men tried with adversity, and maintaining their patience and integrity, represents them rather as objects of reverence than of compassion, annexes blessedness to their condition, and pronounces them happy upon the whole.

III. Another motive to allay our discontent may be suggested to us from considering the bad disposition of so many persons, who having those things of which we are deprived, yet are by no means contented. They want something which they have not, or they are afraid of losing that which they have. We think them no better than fools. But have we not reason to fear that if we were in their situation, we should be just such fools as

they? A person who is resigned and contented in an inconvenient state, may reasonably enough presume that a better state would not spoil him; but the same discontent which makes his present condition so irksome to him, would probably follow and accompany him even in the midst of plenty and prosperity.

IV. Another cause for contentment may be drawn from such a consideration of divine Providence, as the light of reason will suggest. God is our common Father, the best and greatest of beings: he is not an unconcerned spectator of causes and effects; he is not ignorant of our condition; he is not envious and cruel; he takes no pleasure in our disappointments and sorrows; he places us in a state which he knows to be convenient for us, though we perhaps cannot at present discern it to be so. Let us therefore humbly, and, if we can, cheerfully commit ourselves to his care, and be contented to act the part allotted to us. To will what God wills, to like what he orders, is a duty which was discerned by several persons even in the pagan world, and recommended by some of them in an excellent manner.

V. Another reason for contentment is taken from a consideration of the advantages and of the good things which fall to our share. Every dissatisfied person is ungrateful. What he has not he knows too well, and calls to mind too often; and of what he has he seems to be quite ignorant. Several blessings which deserve daily return of thanksgiving are lost upon him, blessings which relate to his mind, or body, or possessions, or friends, or family.

VI. It should also be considered that there are many advantages which often arise out of those very inconveniences which we dislike, and that there are many evils and bad consequences which frequently attend a more flourishing condition.

We may instance in poverty, that is, in a middle state between indigence and wealth. A person in that state hath perhaps few friends, but they are usually sincere; he hath few enemies, and those usually inconsiderable. Envy and calumny commonly spare him and overlook him, as one beneath their notice; his

wants call him to labour, to industry, to temperance, and these are the best means of preserving the health of his body and of his mind. Thus might we survey and examine many of the hardships and misfortunes of which men complain, and point out something profitable which often accompanies them and lessens their weight.

But wealth and power and prosperity, though harmless in themselves, are to many persons very pernicious; to a weak mind and a bad temper they prove fatal blessings and dangerous companions. They come like proud and magnificent guests, and bring with them a long train of troublesome attendants, of follies, and cares, and disorders; they teach men to forget their great concern, to contract an immoderate fondness for the amusements and allurements of the world; and by raising their passions and weakening their reason, they make them unable to bear even common and trifling disappointments.

VII. I have shewed that we ought to accept of the state in which Providence hath thought fit to place us: and the reasons hitherto used have been those which our own abilities enable us to discover. But there are yet stronger motives to contentment, which revelation more particularly suggests to us. Contentment is best learned in the school of Christ: there St. Paul learned it; *I have learned*, says he, *in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*

Another reason then for contentment may be drawn from considering God's love and care for us, as set forth in the gospel. He is there represented as the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation; we are there taught that he loved us before we loved him, and so loved the world, that he gave his only Son to mankind, and with him and by him remission of sins and assurance of happiness; that he who conferred upon us so inestimable a benefit, will certainly refuse us nothing expedient for us; that

he who gave us his Son, will freely give us all things; that he is our Father, who loves us better than any parent ever loved any child; that we may cast our cares upon him, because he careth for us, and will never forsake those who serve him; that when evil of any kind befalls us, God permits and designs it for our profit, either to wean us from this world, or to try our love to him, and to exercise our virtue, or to correct us for some failings, or because too much prosperity might be dangerous and fatal to us; that all things shall work together for our good, and that we shall receive from him an hundred fold now, in this present time, that is, many solid advantages, which are beyond comparison more valuable than those upon which the world sets so great an esteem.

VIII. Another motive to contentment ariseth from reflexions upon our own defects and unworthiness. If upon a review of our lives, our conscience bears witness against us that we have been guilty of many transgressions, and this is the case of many a discontented person, all dissatisfaction under our present condition must be most unreasonable and ungrateful. How can we think it hard that God should not grant us all our desires, when we have not given him what he requires from us? Instead of yielding to sullen discontent, we should be very thankful that we have opportunities in our hand of reconciling ourselves to him by amendment. Why should a living man complain? Life, considered only in itself, is perhaps of no high value; but to one who hath mispent his past days, and been negligent in his duty, every hour of it is an inestimable treasure, because rightly employed it may conduce to his eternal welfare. Whosoever hath still his peace to make with God, and time still allowed him to do it, should esteem himself most happy, and think of the case of those sinners whose sun is set, from whose eyes the things belonging to their peace are now hid, and who are gone to receive the recompense of their evil deeds. How gladly would they return, and take up with a life which he thinks destitute of all comfort!

IX. The last motive to contentment which I shall mention, arises from the

consideration of the reward which is set before us.

It is a most certain and evident truth, that if any person firmly believed a future state of happiness, and could entertain an humble and modest hope that he should have some share in it, he would more easily rest satisfied with his condition for the few days of his pilgrimage here below. The expectation of undisturbed peace and rest from all trouble, the hope of living for ever with God and with good beings, and of making a continual progress in wisdom and knowledge, in virtue and in every amiable disposition, would compose the mind, and raise it above care and disquiet. Temporal inconveniences would then seem little and inconsiderable, and the common objects of men's hopes and fears, of their desires and uneasiness, would appear as a shadow which in a moment is and is not. Whilst the inhabitants of this world are busied in various employments with eager diligence and assiduity, as if they had no views reaching beyond this life, or as if they were to dwell here for ever; whilst some of them heap up riches, others seek applause and respect, others labour to advance themselves, others are wholly taken up with pleasures and amusements, others grieve because they are disappointed, and their labours are unrewarded, and the world frowns upon them; the swift and silent flight of days carries them all to the hour when these things cease, or when they have no further use. The children of God, like the children of this world, have their appointed time to employ; like them they pass their days in a place where there is no settled habitation, no certain possession; like them they meet with vicissitudes of ease and pain, of prosperity and adversity; like them they are carried away by the revolutions of days and years to their last end: but to Christians this last end is the dawning to an everlasting day, the entrance into peace and happiness, and the beginning of a life which alone deserves the name of life.

These are motives which reason and revelation offer, to make us contented in our several states. If they have no good effect, the fault is rather in us than in them; and indeed it is easier to convince

the understanding, than to reform the heart and compose the passions. The true method therefore to acquire contentment is to be good, or, if we have offended, to repent and amend: else we may seek it late and early, but we shall not find it. It doth not use to make its abode in wicked minds. It is probable that such persons will not possess it even when they are in a state of prosperity, because guilt is commonly an uneasy thing; but it is most certain that they will not enjoy it when evil of any sort overtakes them; for that is the time when their conscience will give them the most disturbance.

As a careful observance of our duty in general is the best method of acquiring contentment, so there are particular acts of religion which have a more immediate connection with it: such is supplication to God, that he would raise our minds above the world, and scatter those clouds of sadness that overshadow them, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and strengthen us against all events, to which humble and earnest addresses, favourable promises of support are made in the Scriptures; such is humility, and a sense of our defects; and such is gratitude for benefits received.

To these we should by all means add industry in our affairs and callings. If you observe the dissatisfied part of mankind, you shall find no small number of them to be indolent and unoccupied. Idleness breeds in them discontent; and discontent increases their aversion from business; and then every thing displeases them. But industry is innocent, pleasant, and profitable; drives out despondence and melancholy by diverting the thoughts, and fixing them on other objects, and by ever presenting to the mind something new, and something useful.

To industry should also be joined a sober and sparing use of those things which are not absolutely requisite to our being, or to our well being; a decent moderation in food, in raiment, in furniture, in equipage, in diversions and amusements. For here again, if you consider the discontented tribe, you shall find that one great cause of their uneasiness arises from their coveting, not the necessities, no, nor yet the conven-

cess, but the superfluities of life; it arises from those artificial and imaginary wants, which are not of God's producing, which the world, the flesh, and the devil, have contrived together to create, which human nature knows not, and which reason and Scripture allow not. All such extravagant cravings bring forth as many moral evils and pernicious effects. Of this wicked and widespread disease the remedy is always at hand, and that remedy is temperance.

And here the present season, and the exhortations of the church, admonish me to recommend to you temperance, and abstinence, abstinence exercised with discretion; and not to dismiss you without some hints upon this subject.

There is, as we may not improperly call it, a perpetual fast, to which we are obliged, as rational creatures and as Christians, namely, a fast from all intemperate affections, turbulent passions, and irregular practices. But there is also an abstinence at particular times from the lawful pleasures of life; and the fitness of such a conduct may easily be proved upon the principles of human reason and common sense. I explain myself by a few instances: your own thoughts may suggest more.

A person in health and good circumstances hath food of various kinds at command. But such is the instability of human affairs, that he may be reduced to a morsel of bread. It is expedient therefore for him, at certain times, to take up with such spare and plain diet, as sufficeth to remove pain, and to satisfy the cravings of the body. He will be better able to shift for himself upon any turn of fortune. I need not add that such abstinence will conduce to preserve his health. No one, I presume, will deny it.

Such a person, it may be, hath various diversions and entertainments at command, and may repair to them as often as he thinks fit. But many accidents may deprive him at a stroke of all these beloved amusements, which are the epidemical disease and infatuation of the present age. Let him learn then how to live without them, by shunning them more frequently, whilst they are in his reach.

Such a person may usually have a variety of company abroad and at home.

But various events may reduce him to solitude. Let him then learn beforehand to bear solitude at certain times, to converse with useful books, with his God, and with his own soul, and think himself in good company.

Whosoever practises such abstinence upon the principles above mentioned, may be said to keep a moral and philosophical fast; but if what he thus saves in his expences, he gives to the needy and deserving, then, and not till then, he converts his rational into a truly religious and Christian fast.

SERMON C.

By DOCTOR JORTIN.

On Humility.

PET. i. 5.

-- Be clothed with humility.

IN my remarks upon the subject of humility, I shall follow the usual method of discoursing upon moral virtues.

I. I will consider the nature and the effects of humility:

II. I will represent the motives and inducements to the practice of it.

I. I will consider its nature and effects, and represent it in these three views:

As it relates to our own private thoughts, and is confined to ourselves:

As it respects our duty to God:

As it influences our conduct towards our neighbour.

Humility, as it relates to our own private thoughts and judgment, requires that we should entertain no better an opinion of ourselves than we deserve. To judge too hardly and severely of ourselves, and to fancy that we are guilty of faults from which we are free, cannot be acts of humility, because there can be no virtue in mistake and ignorance. Only, as we have all a propensity to extenuate our defects, and to over-rate our good deeds, it is safest to err on the other side, to correct this bent by forcing the mind somewhat to-

wards the contrary way, and frequently to review our failings, and the many causes which we have of rejecting all arrogant and conceited thoughts.

Our Maker hath conferred upon us several gifts which we cannot possibly value too much, as long as we acknowledge them to come from him, and endeavour to make a right use of them. It shews ingratitude and ill-nature to lessen and undervalue the benefits which we receive from our friends; and to behave in this manner towards God, is still more blameable. In forming, therefore a mean and despicable opinion of ourselves in particular, and of human nature in general, there may be not only no sound judgment, no modesty, no goodness of any sort, but error, ignorance, malevolence, and depravity of heart.

Some of the unbelieving and irreligious tribe have said, that a persuasion of the soul's immortality and of future rewards arose from the presumption and vanity of man, who being proud and high-minded, fancies himself a more considerable and important animal than he really is; whilst they, throwing aside these prejudices, and aspiring to no such dignity, meekly acknowledge themselves to be brethren to the brutes, and expect after a few days to perish with them. This is humility; but it is so only in a bad sense, in the sense which the Romans used to fix upon the word, intending to express by it a sordid and mean spirit.

Others have affirmed, that man never performs any good action, that all his seeming virtues are real vices, because self-love and a regard to his own interest is at the bottom of them, and conducts him in every step that he takes.

They who entertain such injurious notions of human nature, forfeit all claim to the approbation and esteem of others. Charity itself, which thinketh no evil, cannot judge favourably of those who would transform every thing into vice, and banish all virtue from the earth.

Others, who are much better persons than the former, think that it is God who does all, in and for the righteous, in an arbitrary and irresistible manner, giving to some and refusing to others that assistance without which every one must

perish. And this notion is, as they pretend, the very character of humility; whilst they really, though I will not say designedly, detract from the goodness, and justice, and wisdom of God, and confound the notions of virtue and vice.

Lastly, there are some who have too mean an opinion of their own abilities; and by fancying themselves to be useless; become so, and dare not attempt many things in which they are capable of succeeding, and which they ought to perform. This behaviour arises more from indolence or melancholy than from humility.

Humility then, as it relates to the judgment which we form concerning ourselves, is a due sense of our imperfections; of those which are common to human nature, and of those which are more peculiarly our own.

The imperfections common to human nature are these:

Mortality, which came into the world by sin, and all the bad consequences attending it, a body weak and frail; and exposed to various disorders and diseases, which, as it is united to the soul, hath a great influence upon its operations, and often proves an impediment to its progress towards wisdom and goodness.

A stronger propensity to evil than to good, which all persons at certain times and on certain occasions have experienced, and guilt, from some degrees of which none was ever free.

An understanding liable to be frequently deceived, and a knowledge which at the best is much confined.

The infirmities peculiar to ourselves are those defects, either in goodness, or in knowledge, or in wisdom, by which we are inferior to other persons.

To be sensible of these weaknesses and faults, is humility, as it relates to ourselves; to lessen or overlook them, is pride.

Let us now consider the effects which humility produces towards God.

Here it is also necessary to distinguish between true and false humility. That God is most just and holy, and that we are sinners, that the gospel contains a perfect rule of righteousness, and that the best of us in many things transgress this rule: these are truths of which

we ought to have a serious and a constant sense.

But there are here also extremes which should be avoided; for we may form too abject and too bad an opinion of ourselves, or we may represent God as a most strict and severe and inexorable master, or we may imagine that a perfection which we are not able to acquire, is enjoined to us as necessary to salvation, or we may fear that repentance and amendment shall avail us nothing; or we may make religion to consist principally in a set of trifling and difficult rules, from which if we swerve, our mistaken conscience will condemn us. Such notions as these have in a greater or a lesser degree possessed many minds, and hence hath arisen a slavish dread and horror of God, and a devotion overrun with superstition and uncommanded austerities. This is not humility, but ignorance; abject fear and religious melancholy.

True and rational humility, as it influences our behaviour towards our Maker, produces a religious awe, and banishes presumption, and carelessness, and vain-glory. The humble person, considering the perfections of God, and comparing them with his own imperfections, approaches him with reverence, and acknowledges himself unworthy of his favour, and unable, without his assistance, to perform his duty, to obtain either temporal conveniences or eternal life. He trusts not to his own heart, or wisdom, or strength. He frequently reflects and confesses his omissions and transgressions, and uses them as motives to greater industry and watchfulness. He receives temporal good from the hands of God with gratitude; and temporal evil with resignation, as a correction which he deserves, as a trial of his obedience, and as intended for his benefit.

The effects which humility produces in our behaviour towards men, are now to be considered; and here also the same distinction is to be repeated which was made before, namely, that there is a deceitful and false humility, which ought to be avoided. Thus some speak contemptibly of themselves, and pretend that they are ignorant of things in which they are well-skilled, and acknowledge them-

selves inferior to those whom they surpass; some pay a servile deference to the opinions and directions of others, and dare not use that reason and understanding which God has given them; some shun the conversation of their equals, and chuse companions of the lowest sort; and all these persons either fancy themselves to be humble, or would be accounted so by the world. Yet in such a conduct there may be no humility and modesty, but hypocrisy, or affectation, or bigotry, or a meanness of spirit mixed with pride and vanity.

Between an unmanly contempt and disregard of ourselves, with an abject fear and blind reverence of others, which is one extreme, and a proud, conceited, overbearing insolence, which is the other extreme, true humility proceeds always uniform and decent.

The humble person never assumes what belongs not to him; he desires to possess no more power, and to receive no more respect and compliance from others than is suitable to his own character and condition, and appointed by the laws and customs of society.

He is not a rigid exacter of the things to which he has an undoubted right; he can overlook and excuse many faults: he is not greatly disturbed and provoked at those slights and affronts which put vain and haughty persons out of all patience.

He is easy and quiet in his station, though he may deserve a better; not inclined to trouble the world with complaints and solicitations.

He can behold the success, much more the abilities and virtues, of others with the same even temper, and is not disposed to hate, or slander, or envy them upon that account.

The good and useful qualities with which he is endued, he employs in a prudent and unaffected manner, neither concealing them when they ought to appear, nor putting them forth for the sake of applause.

He is obedient to his superiors in things just and lawful, rendering tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

He is dutiful to his parents, teachers,

and masters, courteous towards his equals, condescending towards his inferiors, merciful and placable towards his enemies, gentle and patient towards those who are in error, or overtaken in a fault.

He is candid in his judgment, and more inclined, when there is any room for it, to think and speak favourably than hardly.

He exercises power, if it be committed to him, with justice and impartiality, tempered with as much forbearance and lenity as is consistent with the public good.

II. The nature of humility has been considered. Let us now, secondly, consider the motives to the practice of it.

1. Humility is a virtue so excellent, that the Scriptures have in some sort ascribed it even to God himself.

Humility is a right opinion and estimate of ourselves, producing a suitable behaviour towards others. But as in ourselves we find much imperfection, a dependence always upon God, and often upon men, and no good quality which we can call entirely our own, and for which we are not indebted to our Maker; hence it is that humility consists principally in a due sense of our defects, our transgressions, our wants, and the obligations which we have received. Therefore such humility cannot be in God, in Him who possesses all perfections. But there is a part of humility, as it relates to our behaviour towards men, called condescension; and this is sometimes represented in Scripture as a disposition not unworthy of the Divine Nature. *The Lord is high above all, his glory is above the heavens; yet he humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth.* Again: *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.* Again; *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* that is, that thou condescendest to take notice and care of him. This condescension is ascribed to God, not as if it were an occupation below him, or unworthy of his power and wisdom; but because a like behaviour in men towards their inferiors is called condescension. And in us it is called condescension, because we descend, not

from our dignity, but from that false and foolish superiority and state which vain and conceited persons usurp and maintain.

2. The example of our Saviour is an example of every virtue, particularly of humility. He himself calls upon us to observe and imitate it, to come and learn of him to be meek, lowly in heart, patient, calm, and condescending.

His humility appears in most of the actions and circumstances of his life; in his birth, by which he became the child of a parent not less poor than virtuous; in the obscurity which he chose till he entered into his ministry; in his care to conceal his dignity, upon most occasions; in his submission to the ceremonial law, to the civil government, to wicked magistrates, to extreme want, and to extreme sufferings, in continually promoting, not his own glory, but the glory and honour of his Father; in his behaviour towards those who sought him, and towards those whom he himself took the pains to seek and to save, towards the ignorant and the mistaken, the sorrowful and penitent, the sick and needy, towards his friends and followers, and towards his accusers, betrayers, slanderers, persecutors, and murderers.

3. In the behaviour of the angels, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, we find that part of humility called condescension, or a willing and cheerful submission to any offices by which the good of others may be promoted. We are there taught that they have been, and that they always are ready at God's appointment, to guide, to direct, to succour, to comfort, to instruct, to assist, to relieve, to protect and deliver good men. Thus are they ministering spirits; and in the intercourse between us and them, the labour and the attendance is theirs, the profit is ours; we are ministered unto, and they minister. Hence we must learn to think it no disgrace to be, as our Lord says he was, the servants of all; to be occupied in procuring the ease, the improvement, the welfare, and the happiness of our brethren, and to account no acts base and mean, which produce so noble and excellent effects. In truth, we cannot be more creditably employed; nor can the holy angels better shew the excellence of their nature, than in thus stooping

ing to our necessities; for it is more blessed, and more honourable too, to give than to receive. They bestow upon us substantial benefits, and we can return them nothing besides reverence and gratitude. Whosoever best imitates these holy spirits in humility and condescension towards his inferiors, approaches nearest to them in dignity; and whilst he abases himself, his actions exalt him.

4. It is affirmed in many places of Scripture, that humility secures to us the favour of God, and will bring down his blessing upon ourselves and our undertakings.

He that humblath himself shall be exalted: with the lowly is wisdom: before honour is humility: honour shall uphold the humble in spirit: God shall save the humble: he giveth grace to the lowly, and exalteth the humble and meek: whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven: thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word: them that are meek will God guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them will he teach his way: he hath hidden the most valuable knowledge (that is, religious knowledge) from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed it unto babes.

From these passages we may observe that humility is highly acceptable to God; in general, because it is a virtue; in particular, because it disposes men to receive with modest submission the great truths of religion, to be willing to receive instruction, to yield to reason, and when there is sufficient evidence that a doctrine or precept is from God, to believe and observe it.

5. Humility usually gains the esteem and love of men, and consequently the conveniences, at least the necessities of life. Every one who has even slightly observed what passes in the world, must see and know this. Since all love themselves, they will probably approve and favour those who never provoke, insult, deride, or injure them, who shew them respect and civility, and do them good offices. The humble person therefore takes the surest way to recommend himself to

those with whom he is joined in society, to increase the number of his well-wishers and friends, and to escape or defeat the assaults of detraction, envy, and malice. This amiable quality will stand by him, will be a protector and benefactor to him in all stations, and through all his days, particularly when he first enters into business and appears in public. Then the want of this one virtue is enough to ruin the person who stands so much in need of assistance, instruction, and recommendation. He who is young and unexperienced, proud and insolent, will scarcely be able to improve either his mind or his fortunes, and if he falls, will fall unpitied.

6. Such are the present advantages which humility usually secures to us from God and from men; usually, I say, but not constantly; because it is possible that an humble person may be neglected by the world, and that God may not interpose in his behalf, and may defer his reward to the next life. Therefore the most certain present recompense of humility is that which arises from its own nature, and with which it repays the mind that entertains it; and a very valuable recompense it would be, though it were the only one allotted to this virtue.

An humble person neither hates nor envies any one; therefore he is free from those very turbulent and uneasy vices which are always a punishment to themselves.

He is not discomposed by the slights or censures of others. If he has undesignedly given some occasion for them he amends the fault: if he deserves them not, he regards them as little.

He is contented with his condition, if it be tolerable: and therefore he finds satisfaction in all that is good, and overlooks and in some measure escapes all that is inconvenient in it.

He has a due sense of his unworthiness and defects, by which he is taught to bear calamities with patience and submission, and thereby to soften their harsh nature, and to allay their violence.

He is free from pride and ambition; therefore he never sacrifices his integrity, his honour, and his peace of mind, those substantial blessings, to the splendid trifles which are the objects of pride and ambition. He desires not to obtain them at all,

much less to obtain them in the common way, by sordid flattery, by sinful compliances, by dissimulation, by lying and slandering, by deceiving and over-reaching, by violence and oppression, by loss of time, by useless occupations, by dangerous attempts, by profusion and extravagance, by methods which have been pernicious to the fortunes, to the body, and to the mind of multitudes.

7. Lastly, from the account which we have given of humility, we may draw this conclusion, that it is not, as the insolent and haughty are inclined to imagine, an unmanly and sordid disposition? It is true that the word humility is used by Latin writers in a bad sense for meanness of spirit; but the pagans were not ignorant of this virtue, and have recommended it; only they gave it another name. Christianity indeed hath taught us juster notions of humility than they commonly entertained; for they usually considered humility, which they called Modesty, or Moderation, as a social virtue, as it influenced our behaviour towards ourselves and towards men; but humility towards God few of them seem to have sufficiently apprehended. It is indeed a virtue so remote from meanness of spirit, that it is no bad sign of a great and exalted mind. An humble person is one who is neither puffed up with approbation and applause, nor greatly provoked or disturbed by censure and ill-usage, who envies none placed above him, and despises none below him, who dares examine his own conduct, and condemn whatsoever is faulty in it, who is gentle to others and severe to himself, who desires to obtain no more than he deserves, who can quit even that also, if his duty requires it, who is contented to act the part which Providence allots to him, who is free from irregular self-love, that is, from one of the most insinuating and prevailing weaknesses of mankind, which may not improperly be called the inner garment of the soul, the first which it puts on, and the last which it puts off. If this be not, it will be hard to say what is greatness of mind.

On the contrary, if we would know what meanness of spirit is, and how it acts, let us look for it amongst the proud and insolent, and we shall not lose our labour. A proud man is one who is glad to receive homage and flattery, though it be

offered to him by the most ignorant or worthless, and cannot bear contempt even from them; who therefore is the servant or slave of all, not in a good sense, but because his happiness depends upon their opinion and behaviour; who has no heart to own his obligations to God and man, whose life and conduct is one continual lie, who assumes good qualities which he has not, and is blind to his own faults; who desires to possess what he should not, and what he often cannot obtain; and who is much dissatisfied when he is disappointed. These are the persons who despise humility, and by despising recommend it.

S E R M O N C I.

On our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves: and first on our Duty to God.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

THE gospel of Jesus Christ, saith St. Paul, is revealed to us, and the design of it is, to teach and enable us to behave ourselves here in such a manner that we may obtain eternal life. Thus the words of the text contain in them a compendious representation of the whole duty of man, namely, faith and good works.

What relates to faith is rather intimated than expressed; but it is very plainly intimated, for since this perfect rule of life is discovered by the gospel, doubtless we must receive the gospel, and assent to it, and this is faith.

As to practice, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly. Sobriety contains our duty to ourselves, righteousness, our duty to our neighbour, and godliness our duty to God; and these duties are closely connected, and often coincide with one another and with Christian faith.

I shall at present consider that part of our duty which relates more directly to God, and is called godliness, though the word godliness or piety often stands for all religion in general.

In the first place, then, Christianity

commands us to believe that there is one God, the Creator and Father of all. This is the foundation of religion; faith in God is the ground and support of all goodness, and may itself in some sense be accounted a virtue, since it ariseth from sober consideration, from a regard to truth and goodness, and must be kept alive by the same means; and since a vicious and debauched mind is strongly disposed to doubt whether there be an invisible Creator and Lord of all, and to wish that there were none.

A belief in God is faith, and not sight, because the object of it is He who is not to be perceived by our senses, or comprehended by our imagination; but it is a faith founded upon reason, and supported by convincing arguments, of which the most plain and familiar are the frame and order and disposition of the visible world, the general consent of mankind, and the general usefulness of the doctrine itself, which is adapted to do us good, and which cannot possibly do us any harm.

Moreover, the Christian religion teacheth us to entertain just and honourable notions of God's perfections, both those which we commonly call natural perfections, such as eternity and infinite power; and those which we call moral perfections, as holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy. The Scriptures frequently remind us of both, as being proper to excite in us a fear and a love of God.

They cannot be said to entertain right conceptions of the Deity who extol his power, and his absolute and uncontrollable dominion over his creatures; but represent him at the same time as ruling in a way which, in any other being, we should call arbitrary and cruel. This can never be reconciled with the common notions of holiness, justice, and goodness; nor with the Scriptures, which represent God as love itself, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. It was long ago observed, that there never was any opinion, how absurd soever, which was not maintained by some or other of the ancient philosophers; but yet there are not to be found even amongst them any such hateful sentiments concerning God's transactions with men. To suppose that God

hath doomed his creatures to eternal misery for being in a state of sin, which they cannot avoid, and out of which he will not help them, this, I say, is such a manifest contradiction to the divine perfections, that no men could possibly have entertained it, if they had not misunderstood some texts of Scripture, and taken it for a doctrine of revealed religion.

They who entertain just thoughts of God, and declare them upon all proper occasions, may be said to hallow or sanctify his name, which that all persons may do, we are taught by our Saviour to wish in our daily prayers. In this the Gentiles failed greatly, who ascribed to their deities human vices, and honoured them with impure and cruel rites. The Jews were not entirely free from fault in this respect, being much inclined to represent God as caring only for their nation, and regardless of the Gentiles; and indeed all Christians have not sufficiently avoided the same errors.

These things are of the more importance, because they who judge amiss concerning the perfections and the government of God, are much inclined to imitate all the defects which they ascribe to him.

It is a great violation of our duty to God, to interpose his holy name in things of no consequence, or, which is far worse, in confirmation of things which are false. Therefore our Lord hath not only forbidden perjury, but oaths upon trivial occasions; even those oaths, in which care was taken to avoid mentioning the name of God. Whosoever understands how sacred the divine Majesty is, and how many and how great benefits we have received, and have room to hope and expect from our Creator, cannot think of him without the deepest reverence, and will never name him in a rash and ludicrous manner, nor call upon him to be witness to a falsehood. This wicked behaviour was frequent amongst both Jews and Gentiles, and is no less frequent amongst persons who call themselves Christians; but it hath been detested and condemned by all serious and wise men in all times and places.

With this reverence towards God is joined a love to him. If we have any sense of his goodness and favour towards

us his unworthy creatures, we cannot refuse him our love. This love consists, first, in a grateful sense of his benefits; secondly, in a desire of pleasing him, which shall be strong and active enough to overcome all contrary desires, so that our heart shall not be divided between God and any object which God condemns. This duty Moses enjoined, and our Saviour enforced, and represented as the first and great commandment.

Other love towards God than this the Scriptures know not: they never recommend those warm transports and that bold familiarity which some zealots affect; nor that refined and mysterious devotion which another sort of visionaries require, who say that we must love God for himself alone, and without any regard to the benefits we receive from him; for, first, the love of God is reason and not passion, reverence and not presumption; secondly, it is gratitude, and we love him because he first loved us.

The love of God cannot lie concealed in the breast, but will shine forth, and shew itself by good works, particularly by a love of mankind, as the Scriptures assure us. Without this behaviour, in vain do we profess to love God, who requires of us real proofs, and not idle words.

There is a worship which is due to God alone. Worship, or adoration, when it means a religious duty paid to God, is of two kinds. There is a worship of the body, and there is a worship of the mind. By the worship of the body, which hath been various in various times and places, is to be understood an humble posture, by which persons intend to acknowledge the supreme dominion of him to whom this reverence is paid. By the worship or adoration of the mind, is meant that submissive disposition, by which we own and profess, that He whom we adore is engaged with all perfections, and that we depend wholly upon him, and from him expect all our happiness. Therefore God, as he is the Creator, the Lord, the Protector, and the Father of all, ordered himself alone to be adored in this manner, both in body and spirit; which our Saviour hath also confirmed, when he said to Satan, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,*

and him only shalt thou serve; him only, in opposition to false gods; for, as St. Paul says, though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; as there be gods many and lords many, yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we to him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. And our Saviour saith, *that the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son as they honour the Father.*

The Gentiles notoriously transgressed this commandment, worshipping any thing, and every thing; as if it were lawful for mortal men to confer divine honours upon this or that object, as flattery or fancy should direct; than which nothing more absurd could easily be imagined, nor more injurious to the majesty of God.

The law and the gospel teach us, that in God alone our confidence should be placed, because he alone can and will do all things for us, and will never deceive our reasonable hopes, whilst in created beings there is neither that all-commanding power, nor that invariable will of doing good, nor that never-failing constancy in performing promises. So that reliance or trust is no inconsiderable part of our duty towards God. It relates in some degree to the things of this life, which God promiseth to his servants, so far as he judgeth fit, and conducing to their true interest. But it principally hath in view the endless happiness of the next world, which we should account to be our chief good.

And because our Lord hath given us clearer promises of life eternal than had been revealed before, and confirmed them by many proofs, and by his own glorious resurrection and ascension, the reliance which we place in God should be proportionably stronger and steadier. This reliance is a part of Christian faith, and is connected with obedience; and hence we may see that faith is deservedly extolled by the sacred writers, since it contains in itself, or in its genuine effects, the whole duty of man.

Since in many things we all offend, since we ought to deplore our omissions and commissions, and to wish that we

may perform a better service for the future; since we are continually contending with temptations, by which if we be finally overcome, we have no longer a claim to the promises of the gospel, God hath commanded us to address ourselves to him for the pardon and the succour of which we stand in need. He wanteth not our prayers, to be informed of our weaknesses and necessities, or to be intreated and importuned as a difficult master, who will sell his favours upon no other terms. Nothing moved him to create us but his own nature overflowing with beneficence. He hath granted us many blessings, which we had no notion of requesting; as redemption by Christ, the knowledge of the gospel, and all the benefits which arise from these, and are connected with them. He hath imposed upon us the duty of prayer purely for our own sakes, and to make us better and happier. For when we pray to him, we call to mind our past follies and offences, and at the same time his infinite goodness, which forgives them upon our repentance, and we become sensible that we depend upon him in all respects, whence naturally arise gratitude towards so kind a benefactor, and earnest desires to obey and please him. Hence also will this consideration present itself to us, that if the compassionate and placable nature of God be so amiable, and in our sight the brightest and the fairest of all the divine perfections, we ought to imitate it in our behaviour towards others, and be merciful even as he is merciful, and, like him, forgive those who trespass against us.

Three things are requisite to make our prayers acceptable to God :

First, We must ask of God the things which are really and invariably good; such as the knowledge of moral and religious truth, the remission of sins, the divine assistance, and eternal life, all which are intimately united, and neither can or ought to be separated. For other good things we are permitted to ask; but this exception is always to be made or understood, that God would supply our wants, and satisfy our natural and innocent desires, in such a measure and manner as shall seem best to him, who

knoweth better than we what is expedient for us.

Secondly, We must make our requests to God with acquiescence and humility. We must not prescribe to him what he should grant us; nor ever repine and murmur, if temporal blessings be withheld from us.

Thirdly, We must be fully sensible that we can have no certain access to him, no security of his favour, unless we endeavour to conform our behaviour to his precepts; for it is not reasonable that he should comply with the requests of those who refuse to comply with his holy will. Thus much our Saviour intimates, when he directs us to ask in his name. To ask in the name of Christ is the same thing as to profess before God that we are indeed the disciples and the servants of his Son, and upon that account to beg and to hope that he will extend his goodness towards us. But no person can have any pretence to make use of the name of Christ, who pays no regard to the conditions which Christ requires of his followers.

And because the love of our neighbour is not less our duty than the love of God, therefore we are taught to extend our prayers beyond our own private necessities; and whatsoever blessings we would gladly receive ourselves, we should also wish for all mankind.

Vehemence and earnestness is commendable in our prayers; but it is then only commendable when we ask for life eternal, and for the means conducing to it. A strong desire and a warm importunity to be delivered from temporal calamities, or to be enriched with temporal blessings, is a temper to which religion hath made no favourable promises. St. Paul earnestly besought the Lord that he might be delivered from the angel of Satan who buffeted him. But this request was not granted, because it was more to his true advantage to labour under that inconvenience, whatsoever it was, than to be freed from it. And he, as a wise and good man, acquiesced in the divine will.

Although the Jews were furnished both with precepts and with examples of prayer in the books of Moses and of the

Prophets, yet was this duty neither completely taught, nor perfectly understood; because the express and literal promises in the law were temporal; so that they seldom seem to have asked for any thing higher; but only, as to things spiritual, to have requested in general for the favour of God. And yet the good men, who lived under that dispensation, were certainly not without hopes of a better state beyond the grave, and trusted in God that he would in some manner provide for them hereafter, according to his wisdom and goodness. We do not find in the books of the Old Testament every thing that is requisite to set the nature of prayer in a true light and to the best advantage; and we must make some suitable abatements and allowances on account of the more imperfect knowledge of those times. However, we find in those sacred writings many excellent examples of piety, of humility, of religious trust and confidence in God. The wiser Pagans have also made some good observations concerning prayer; and particularly they have remarked, that men ought not rashly to ask of the Deity whatsoever their childish and irregular and ignorant desires lead them to wish. They have recommended this short form of prayer, which certainly is modest and judicious; Grant us, O Lord, the things which are good for us, whether we ask, or ask not, for them; and the things which would be hurtful, withhold from us, though we should ask for them. But, besides that the wiser Pagans had some false notions concerning the Deity, the common sort observed no rules of decency and prudence in their prayers. So that Christianity in this, as in many other respects, greatly surpassed the religion of the wisest Pagans and Jews.

With our prayers to God are to be joined praises and thanksgivings to him for his glorious works, and for all the great and lasting benefits which with a liberal hand he pours down upon men. The Psalms of David, and indeed all the books of the holy Scriptures, are full of exhortations to celebrate the power and wisdom and clemency of God. The thing is of itself most reasonable, and whilst we perform it sincerely and heartily, we daily find the good effects of it.

For, besides the perpetual exercise of gratitude, the oftener we consider in our minds and distinctly examine the benefits and the works of God; the more easily we are induced to obey him; and the more effectually deterred from a vicious life. And this is one great reason why God requires from us these acts of piety towards him. No benefit and profit can accrue to him from our praises and thanks; nor would he be the less happy, though we passed over all his favours in stupid silence. Therefore it is for our own sakes that God demands this easy tribute from us. He is indeed said in Scripture to have made and done all for his own glory and praise; but the profit and the benefit of honouring him redound upon us. True it is that God is pleased with our piety, and our dutiful returns, because they are suitable both to his nature and to our own. He hath made all things for his own honour; this was one end: but another end was, that he might exercise his unspeakable goodness towards all objects capable of receiving it.

The writers of the gospels teach us to obey the divine precepts, not as slaves who fear a passionate, unreasonable, and rigid master, but as children who cheerfully comply with the directions and advice of a kind parent, which they know to be intended for their good.

But though the gospel in this respect surpasseth the Jewish dispensation, and treats us as sons, and brings us into a state of liberty, we must not imagine that the service which it demands is something slight and superficial, and requiring no pains and application; for it orders us to put off inordinate desires and evil affections, and, if it should ever prove necessary, to lay down and lose all, rather than to part with our religion, and offend God. Such an obedience is indeed difficult to those who are inclined to a slothful security, and love the world immoderately, and are not deeply affected with the rewards and punishments of the next state: but it may be practised by those who can govern themselves, and who have a lively sense of the great advantages present and future which are secured by piety; and by such it is more easily observed than

a heavy multitude of rites and ceremonies.

This Christian obedience is described in the New Testament by different words and expressions. Sometimes it is called, to love God, sometimes to fear and reverence him. We may be said to love God, when we think honourably of him, gratefully acknowledge his goodness, and prefer his commands to all other considerations. The fear of God is a fear lest, by an improper behaviour, we should shew ourselves unthankful to our best benefactor; it is a fear lest we should incur his displeasure, not only because he can deprive us of happiness, and inflict punishments upon us, but principally because he is so good to us, and imposes nothing upon us which it is not our interest to perform.

Christ also required of his followers to shew openly their faith and love and reverence towards God, to confess their Saviour before men, upon all proper occasions, to excite others to the same disposition and behaviour, and to meet together for the exercise of religious duties. He also declared, that whosoever his servants should be assembled together in his name, he would be spiritually with them. He also promised that his church should never be destroyed, that it should last till the consummation of all things; which promise he hath hitherto fulfilled for more than seventeen hundred years. As to the order and method that should be observed in such assemblies, he gave no particular precepts, but left it to his apostles. Religious government, like civil government, is absolutely necessary in some form or other; but all forms of government are in their own nature indifferent, and so Christian nations have a right to appoint that which suits them best, remembering the direction of the apostle, *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

And because men are more affected with actions than with words, and all religions had their ceremonies, it was fit that Christians should have something of this kind. Therefore Christ appointed two religious rites, but very easy, very plain, and simple, and most remote from vain pomp, or superstition, by which Christians should profess their belief in him, acknowledge themselves his ser-

vants, keep his benefits in remembrance, and declare their friendship for each other. One was Baptism, which was no new thing to the Jews, for it had been practised by them, and also by John the Baptist; nor was it less known to the Gentiles. By this ceremony of initiation, Christians declared themselves servants of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; were reminded that they must cleanse themselves from iniquity, and live a more pure and holy life; and that as they descended into the water and rose up from it, so they must die to sin and rise again to righteousness. The other was the Lord's Supper, which he instituted in memory of his death, and which shews, that they who eat together of the same bread, and drink of the same cup, should account each other as brethren who belong to one family. At the same time Christians profess that they continue in that covenant which Christ ratified by his blood, and that they will endeavour to obey his precepts, and to follow his example. These are ceremonies easy to be performed, and as easy to be understood, if we will content ourselves with the account which the writers of the New Testament have given of them.

From all that hath been said it appears that the end and design of religion was not to afflict and oppress us, but to make us happy. God can take no pleasure in the miseries and sorrows of men: he created us to do us good, not to do us harm. He gave us freedom of action, without which we could neither practise nor understand virtue; but the consequence of freedom is, that we are changeable, and capable of transgressing. Therefore he hath also given us laws, instructions, motives, encouragements, and assistances. It must be confessed, that no man, except our Saviour, ever performed the whole of his duty so perfectly, that he could claim rewards from God on that account. But God requireth not of his servants this sublime holiness; he requires of them that they should preserve themselves from obstinate impenitence and from vicious habits, and when they have trespassed, that they should repent and amend. Great reason have they therefore to return him continual thanks, and to acknowledge his infinite mercy,

which thus stoops and condescends to their infirmity.

If God, without any apparent cause for it, had required of men costly gifts and sacrifices, which might have reduced them to poverty, and the observation of difficult and unimproving ceremonies, these indeed would have been hard laws: but the Christian religion imposeth nothing like this upon us. If the Gentiles believed that such things were required from them, they fell into such errors through their own fault, through the mean conceptions which they entertained concerning the Deity. If the Jews were in some measure burdened with laws of this nature, the reason was, because they had corrupted themselves, and fallen into many of the errors of the Gentiles, so that God, as a lawgiver, was obliged, if we may use that expression, to give them precepts suitable, not so much to his own nature, and to the dictates of reason, as to their carnal minds and stubborn temper. And yet he, by his prophets, instructed them in the superior excellence of morality, and invited them to repentance, with favourable promises of pardon and acceptance, and unfolded to them the spiritual part of religion at intervals and by degrees, as they were capable of receiving it. So that in this also they had great reason to praise and celebrate his long-suffering and goodness.

Thus much may suffice concerning our duty to God, as far as it may be distinguished from our duty to our neighbour and to ourselves.

SERMON CII.

The same Text continued;—or, secondly on our Duty to our Neighbour.

TITUS, ii. 11, 12.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

We are here exhorted by the apostle to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Sobriety comprehends our duty to ourselves, righteousness our duty to our neighbour, and godliness our duty to God.

I proceed now to consider that part of our duty which relates to our neighbour, and which is here called, living righteously or justly. Righteousness frequently means all religion in general; but as it stands in the text distinguished from godliness and sobriety, it means our duty to our neighbour, which in other places of the New Testament is called brotherly love or charity.

1. Under these names of righteousness, of love, and of charity, the gospel comprehends all those kind offices which we ought to perform towards others. This friendly behaviour is called love, because if we love a person, first, we never envy him, or hurt him knowingly and wilfully; but, secondly, wish him all happiness, and assist him as far as we are able; under which two heads is comprehended our duty to our neighbour. This our Saviour commands, when he explains and improves that precept of the law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The same thing he expresses in other words, thus: *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye so unto them*. The same precept is to be found in the book of Tobit, in a form of prohibition; *Do that to no man which thou hatest*. The meaning is, Whatsoever we should certainly and reasonably expect from another, if we were in his circumstances, and he in ours, that we ought to do to him; and whatsoever we should account ill usage, if we suffered it, that we ought not to do. Concerning this charity, or brotherly affection, St. Paul hath discoursed in his first epistle to the Corinthians, and hath given it the preference even to faith and to hope. A virtue so reasonable could not be unknown to the Pagans; their wise men have also recommended it, though they call it by other names, and have not extended it so far as our Saviour hath.

2. Mutual justice and equity are required from us. Justice is that virtue by which we give to every man what is his due by the law of nature, and by the laws of civil society, and abstain from all injury either in word or in deed, in

omission or in commission. Thus far justice proceeds: equity goes still farther; for there are many things which our country requires not of us, and for neglecting which none can call us before the magistrate, which yet an equitable person cannot omit without condemning himself. These sort of duties depend upon a great variety of circumstances, of facts, of persons, of times, and places, which may be such, that it would be unreasonable to act according to strict right, though the laws would give us leave to do it.

3. The gospel requires that we should be charitable towards all persons, as far as we are able, and they are deserving, by shewing them favour and countenance, by using our interest in their behalf, by giving them our help, and by relieving their wants, especially when they are reduced to straits, and unable to provide for themselves.

It is not possible to fix the exact bounds and limits of such liberality, especially in countries like this, where the laws of the land have made a stated and a large provision for the poor; so that this public charity is at the same time the private charity of every person who willingly discharges his part and proportion. What is to be done beyond this, must in a great measure be left to every one's discretion. To do more than this, is certainly the duty of several persons; and the truest objects of such charity are often they who neither ask it nor receive it from the public. Our Saviour, in the gospel of St. Luke, commands us to give alms of such things as we have, that is, according to our present circumstances, and proportionably to our fortunes; which being a general direction, and not descending to particulars, we have no right, that I can discern, to burden the consciences of others with fixed rules about it. Only we are to exhort them to take care that they fall not short of our Saviour's intention. The ancient Christians remarkably fulfilled these precepts, which was no small credit to them and their religion, and greatly conduced to recommend the gospel to the world, and to further its progress.

4. The gospel requires of us, in a singular manner, humanity and meek-

ness. Humanity teacheth us to temper all our words and actions towards our neighbour with civility and goodness, and to abstain carefully from all severe and harsh expressions, all cross and rude behaviour. Meekness restrains our anger, and keeps it in due bounds, so that we neither fly out into an unseasonably passion at the faults of others, nor into railing and reviling, nor harbour malice and revenge in our hearts. We are all of us offended at insolence, contempt, anger, and ill usage; we are pleased when we meet with a contrary behaviour; and consequently this dislike and this approbation should be a rule to us in our conduct towards others. Therefore Christ condemns anger and its effects, and shews that he gives a more excellent precept than is contained in the Mosaic law; for, having observed that the law forbade murder, *Thou shalt not kill*; he adds, *but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement*. This is to be understood of unjust and immoderate anger, which is joined with a desire of revenge, or with a proud and ill-grounded scorn of our neighbour: for we may be angry, when the cause is just, when we keep our anger within due bounds, when it hath no other aim than self-preservation, when it is accompanied with a design of reforming the offender, and not of doing him an injury, and when it excludes not a readiness to forgive him, and to be reconciled to him upon his amendment. *Be ye angry, and sin not*, says St. Paul; *and let not the sun go down upon your wrath;—but let all bitterness, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice*. Christ himself was filled with anger and indignation against some of the Jews; but at the same time he was ready to be reconciled to them, and to receive them favourably, if they would have returned to their duty, and his last words were a prayer to God to forgive them.

By meekness and humanity contentions and quarrels are avoided, with all their pernicious consequences, and the friendship, good will, and esteem of the world is usually secured. But care is to be taken, that, instead of these vir-

ties, we fall not into those vices which have a resemblance of them, and lie concealed under that fair and false appearance: such is a feigned civility and complaisance, which often covers a base and perfidious heart; flattery, which is as ready to commend or excuse vice, as to praise what is praise-worthy; and a mean compliance which approves, or seems to approve, the worst of actions. These are as hurtful as meekness and humanity are useful to society.

These virtues St. Paul hath in view, when in his epistle to the Romans he exhorts Christians, *in honour to prefer one another*, to shew respect and civility to others, without waiting to see whether they will shew as much to us. And St. Peter's direction is, *Honour all men*. If therefore rudeness and inhumanity, and harshness of behaviour, be found in Christians, and in Christians who pretend to great holiness and zeal and piety, this is not to be laid to the charge of Christianity, or of those who first preached it; but it is the fault of those who understand not, or are not willing to understand, the plain precepts of the gospel.

5. To these virtues is fitly joined the love of peace and concord, both in things relating to this world, and in things relating to religion, whether they be matters of belief, or rites and ceremonies and discipline. But as all virtues have a natural union, and can never disagree, without ceasing to be what they are, the love of peace must always be joined with the love of truth and righteousness; and concord is to be so pursued, that we injure not the duty which we owe to God and to ourselves. The regard due to peace requires of every person, that he seek not only his own particular profit and convenience, but the advantage of others, and the common good of society; and by such methods public peace is settled and preserved.

But because every person hath his own private possessions, without which he cannot support himself and his family, it is impossible for us to live in concord with those who endeavour to wrong and defraud us; we must at least avoyn^{use} them as an enemy with whom they are to

can hold no intercourse; and likewise if any one by threats and violence would force us to act contrary to truth and virtue, even the sincerest lover of peace must renounce all society with such a tyrant, lest he should give up those things which in their own nature are most excellent and most useful to mankind, and which God hath expressly commanded us never to forsake. *If it be possible*, says the apostle, *as far as in you lieth, live peaceable with all men*: as far as reason and religion permit, be at peace with others, and let not matters of small consequence, or those faults and defects from which none is entirely free, interrupt and destroy that union.

Christians are members of two societies; as they are men, they belong to the country in which they are born or settled; and as they are Christians, they belong to the church of Christ. But as this church universal, or catholic church, is dispersed over the earth, and cannot assemble together, it was even from ancient times divided into particular and national churches. Every Christian then should be desirous and willing to join himself to his own national church, if he can do it with a safe conscience; and in this affair, he should not give way to small and endless scruples, nor expect that every thing should be conducted exactly as he could wish: for perfection dwelleth not here below, and wise men must either bear with some things which they do not approve and cannot mend, or they must form a religion for themselves and serve God all alone, which is by no means agreeable with mutual edification and with the social nature of Christianity.

But when things are come to such a pass in any nation, that Christians are required to reject and abjure evident truths, to approve monstrous absurdities and flagrant contradictions, to sacrifice reason and common sense to a thing most improperly called faith, and to pay a blind and slavish obedience to the doctrines, and to the false doctrines of men, such a church cannot be accounted a religious society, nor is it lawful to the communion with her. For these and it still weighty reasons, our ancestors know not th.

tors separated themselves from the court and the see of Rome, and began the reformation.

The apostles, at first, did not separate themselves from the Jews, though they differed greatly from them, as long as they were permitted in the synagogues to profess their belief in Christ, to preach his doctrine, and to reject every thing contrary to it; but when this liberty was no longer granted to them, they held their own assemblies apart, and forsook the synagogue. After this, some dissension arose in the Christian congregations which were formed of converted Jews and Gentiles; for the Jews stuck obstinately to their old rites and ceremonies, and the Gentiles refused to observe them. But because in other respects the gospel was obeyed by both, and neither were compelled to do any thing that they held to be unlawful, this difference of opinion was to be mutually tolerated, as St. Paul declares. As for himself, *to the weak he became weak, that he might gain the weak: he was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.* The meaning is, that he thought it a part of Christian prudence to comply with his brethren in matters indifferent, and to gratify them in all things consistent with Christianity.

6. For the same causes Christ commands us to pass over injuries, whether they affect our goods, our reputation, or our body, if they are such as may be borne without great detriment, and permits us not on such occasions to avenge ourselves, or to have recourse to the laws and to the civil magistrate for redress. The law of Moses laid no great restraint upon the Jews in this respect; and somewhat more of forbearance is required from us than was from them. *Ye have heard, says our Lord, that it hath been said, An eye for an eye,—but I say unto you, Resist not evil.* The best commentators have shewed that these and the like precepts, if rightly understood, are in themselves very fit and very profitable to society: for whilst we connive at a small offence or injury, we put a stop to much hatred and strife and variance, which there would be no end, if we would put up with any affront or meekness, it often comes to pass that

hath done the wrong is softened and reclaimed by Christian lenity. But in greater injuries, nothing hinders a man from seeking the assistance of the laws and of the magistrate, or if that cannot be done, from acting in his own defence; for indeed without such a permission no civil society could subsist, and all good men would in a manner be bound hand and foot, and delivered up to the vilest of mankind.

There have been some few of exalted minds amongst the gentiles who disapproved and condemned revenge. But our Saviour hath carried the duty farther, and hath told us, that we must love our enemies, and return good for evil, and pray for those who use us spitefully, and imitate our heavenly Father, who is kind even to the unthankful and to the wicked.

Many of the Jews and gentiles accounted revenge to be lawful, and derided Christian patience as a practice absurd and contrary to human nature. Yet what the gospel requires of this kind, if we mistake it not, is very commendable. If we had been commanded to show particular friendship to wicked men who revile and injure us, to account them worthy and honest persons, to furnish them with power and opportunity to hurt us, and not to be upon our guard against them, these indeed would have been hard sayings. But it is not so; we are commanded to love them so far as to pity their faults and follies, and to shew them such lenity, forbearance, and kindness, such humanity and civility as can be of no detriment to us, to pray to God for their repentance, and if they prove by their behaviour that they repent and are amended, to receive them into favour. ●

None can say that these precepts are impracticable. On the contrary, they are so reasonable, that without mutual indulgences of this kind human society can hardly subsist, and frail and fallible creatures cannot live together in tolerable peace and order, unless patience and forgiveness be in some degree approved and their ^{per-} friends. Christ requires of us thus to bear pardon wrongs and offences, and to be taken good for evil, much more doth that we should love our friends

and benefactors, and requite kindnesses with the same, or, if it be possible, with greater favours. If therefore the Apostles had been silent concerning gratitude, yet it had been plain enough that the whole tenour of the New Testament required this virtue. But our Saviour commended the gratitude of the Samaritan leper, who returned to give him thanks for his cure; and St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, having exhorted them to meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and charity, adds these words, *And be ye thankful*; that is, be grateful both to God and man. And in his Second Epistle to Timothy, describing those wicked men who should arise in the church, he says, that they should be lovers of their own selves, and unthankful.

8. The duties above mentioned relate to all men in general, and are to be practised by every one through the whole course of his life. There are besides these, duties particular to each person, according to his age, rank, condition, and the relation in which he stands to others. Such are the duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of young and old.

Marriage is reduced by our Saviour to its original institution, as it was in the beginning, before the passions of men had broken through the rules which right reason prescribed, and by polygamy had brought poverty, jealousy, and discord into houses, and many troubles and mischiefs into the world; to which had been added another evil, that of frequent divorces upon frivolous causes. The gospel requires of those who enter into this state, that they pass their days together in concord and friendship, and in a joint care of their families.

The gospel requires that behaviour from parents to children and from children to parents, which all wise men must approve. It commands parents to educate their children in the fear of God, and to give them all necessary instruction and maintenance, and neither to spoil them by foolish indulgence, nor to use them harshly and imperiously, and provoke them to wrath, by which they will alienate their affection, and may drive them to take bad courses. They are to

be guided by admonishment and reason, unless they be of incorrigible dispositions.

It commands children to honour and love and succour their parents, to obey them in all things, and in the Lord; that is, in all things which are agreeable to Christianity, or not contrary to it; for in that case, *He that loveth father or mother more than me*, says our Lord, *is not worthy of me*.

But this is a plea for disobedience that rarely happens: and there is more danger in Christian nations, that children should pay too little than too much respect to father and mother. One of the great evils which monkery brought into the Christian world, was the inveigling and stealing of young persons, and receiving them into religious orders, without the consent, and against the consent, of their parents. In this the monks acted like true disciples of the pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make proselytes, and who also taught children to disobey their parents: and you will find it to have been and to be the practice of all fanatics of every sort and tribe, to seduce young people from that deference which they ought to pay to those whom God and nature have appointed for their guides and guardians in their tender years.

In the time when the gospel was first preached, servants for the most part were slaves; and as many of these were converted to Christianity, with or without their masters, it was to be feared lest they should take too much upon them, and think too well of themselves, by entering into a religion which commanded all men to treat one another as brethren. This might have brought a discredit upon the gospel, and have been an hindrance of its progress. Therefore St. Peter and St. Paul earnestly exhort servants or slaves to obey their masters, and to be industrious and honest, and dutifully to serve not only the just and gentle, but the harsh and froward.

The law of nature knows no such thing as slavery; for by nature all men are free and equal: but by the civil laws and by the practice of nations it was established, and it still continues amongst those who know not the gospel, and, the more is the

shame and the pity, it is to be found in some places where Christianity is professed. The religion of Christ, when it first made its progress in the world, left the civil laws of nations, in a great measure, as it found them, lest by altering or repealing them it should bring confusion and disturbance into human society; but as by its own genius and tendency it leads men gently back to the precepts of nature and equity; to kindness and to mercy, it put an end by degrees, in most civilized places, to that excessive distance and difference between masters and slaves, which owed its original to outrage and war, to violence and calamity: so that in Christian countries the service which is performed is usually, as it ought to be, voluntary and by agreement.

But what the writers of the New Testament have said concerning slaves, holds true concerning hired servants, and all those who are employed in other denominations under a master, that they discharge their office modestly, diligently, and willingly, and act with faithfulness and integrity in every thing that is committed to them.

To all masters the gospel enjoins that they be good and just, forbearing haughtiness, insolence, and threatening, and remembering that they also have a master in heaven.

The same sort of directions may be applied to all who are invested with power in any office or station, and to all who are placed under their government.

Of those who are appointed to teach Christianity, it is required that they study and endeavour to preach it in its own native and amiable simplicity. Even as it is contained in the holy scriptures, and that their aim and intention be to do honour to religion, and to make men wiser and better. This also tends to create and preserve a mutual esteem between those who teach, and those who are taught, than which there can be nothing more desirable to the one and to the other; for the world passeth away with all its concerns, but the good effect of brotherly love and Christian edification is stable and permanent.

Of young people it is required that they be of a teachable and tractable tem-

per, and that they furnish themselves by times with useful knowledge and skill, which will enable them to live contentedly and reputably. It is also required of them, that they pay respect to the aged, and be willing to serve and assist them both on account of the bodily infirmities which attend that part of life, and because it will be their own state if God gives them length of days, and because humanity suggests that we should be courteous to those who probably will not stay long with us, and because the aged have commonly more knowledge and discretion, and can instruct the young in things of importance.

From the aged it is expected, that they be endued with Christian virtues, and set a good example to others, since they have the advantage of long observation to make them sensible of the folly of vice, and the beauty and utility of goodness. Age also tempers and weakens the passions, except in those who are enslaved to wicked habits; age also usually brings prudence and judgment; and these things render the old very capable of assisting and directing the young, especially when they can make proper allowances for the warmth and the defects of youth, and can preserve themselves free from austerity and moroseness. Lastly, it becomes them to meditate on death, as on a change which is near at hand, and to be prepared to go hence with decency and resignation.

Concerning the duty of kings, the Apostles have said nothing, because at that time there were no Christian rulers. The law of nature, and the laws of their own nations, and the law of Moses and the gospel, are sufficient to teach them their office, and to shew them the power which their country hath committed to them is a power only to do good, and to restrain evil, and to promote the public welfare.

But concerning the duty of subjects to their princes, the New Testament is not silent. The Apostles recommend, in general expressions, submission and obedience to all who are in authority. St. Paul observes upon this head, that there is no power but from God, and that the powers which be are ordained of God. The meaning is, that civil government is

agreeable to the will of God, and ariseth from the nature of things; for God hath so made mankind, that neither can they subsist without society, nor society without government, nor government without rulers. It is therefore the duty of every private person to be a quiet and a peaceable subject, to do nothing which tends to introduce discord and confusion, and the ruin of the state; but to defend his country on all occasions, and with all his power.

Lastly, there is a particular duty incumbent upon every person, and arising from his particular occupation. state, office, or profession, namely, that he acquire the skill and the knowledge which shall make him fit for it, fit to act in it prudently and honestly; else whatsoever virtues and good qualities he may possess, he is inexcusable both with God and man.

Such is our duty to our neighbour, as it may be collected from reason and revelation.

S E R M O CIII.

By DOCTOR JORTIN.

On the same text; or, thirdly, on our Duty to ourselves.

TITUS, ii. 11, 12.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

WE are here exhorted by the Apostle to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Sobriety comprehends our duty to ourselves, righteousness our duty to our neighbour, and godliness our duty to God.

I shall conclude my observations upon the text with examining that part of our duty which, although it hath some reference both to God and to our neighbour, yet relates more immediately to ourselves. This St. Paul calls, living soberly. The word sobriety hath a more extensive signification in the original than in our language, and comprehends in it, a right exercise of our reason and of

our natural powers, and a discreet government of our passions.

Amongst the helps which God hath bestowed upon us, to lead us to obedience and to happiness, may be reckoned certain useful dispositions and propensities, which are called natural inclinations, which we feel more or less as soon as we come to the use of reason, and which, if we do not corrupt and stifle them, will be confirmed and improved by daily experience, and appear both profitable and commendable. These serve as a counterbalance to those passions which incline us to evil.

First of all then, men are so formed by their Creator that they love truth and hate falsehood. No one chooseth to mistake, to err, and to be deceived; every one is willing and desirous to see things as they really are. We may safely take it for granted, that there are none so brutish, so savage, and so ignorant, as not to approve truth and blame falsehood in general. Consequently they must acknowledge that it is ugly and wicked to deceive, and that it is good and amiable to instruct.

By the same use of reason men see that it is better in general to do good than to do hurt to another, and they generally own it, unless some violent passion prevails with them, and stifles the dictates of nature. When the mind grows calm and capable of exercising its powers, they discover the fitness of such a behaviour, they wish that others would act so towards them, and they endeavour to perform themselves what they thus approve in others.

Hence by steps and degrees we are able to acquire right notions of all sorts of virtues and vices. Every virtuous disposition is advantageous to ourselves and to others, and every vicious habit is hurtful to ourselves and to others. But it must be remembered that the usefulness arising from virtue is not to be considered as confined to a few actions, or to a few men, or to a short space of time: the whole race of mankind, as far as we can be connected with them, and the whole duration of our life, and our future state likewise, are to be taken into consideration. What therefore is useful upon the whole, is agreeable to virtue.

and that is to be called vicious which hath a contrary effect; and we say that men would promote the general happiness and their own at the same time, if they would observe the rule of doing good to all; and that the opposite behaviour will be pernicious to them. To observe this rule, is to live according to the dictates of unprejudiced reason, or to live according to nature, and to pursue the end for which they are called into being; and in acting thus there is a decency and a dignity, whence arise self-approbation and satisfaction of mind. Every one, if he will consult his own heart, and speak his thoughts sincerely, must own that virtue is beautiful and honourable, and worthy of love and praise; and that vice is deformed, and shameful, and detestable. Nothing can silence this opinion, which naturally rises in our minds, except some violent passion depriving us of the free use of reason.

Hence we collect and conclude, that almighty God hath implanted in human nature those inclinations which make us love virtue and truth wherever they appear and shew themselves to us, and shun vice, error, and falsehood, when we know them to be what they are. Hence likewise it follows, that the goodness and decency, or the dishonesty and deformity of actions, depend not at all upon the will and the appointment of men, and of human laws, but upon the nature itself and the relation and connection of things, which is fixed and unchangeable: for as truth and falsehood depend not upon us, so neither do virtue and vice. This unalterable nature of good and evil, of right and wrong, and these judgments concerning it, which our own senses and apprehensions lead us to make, are helps which God hath given us against the power and the temptations of sin. When a man doth ill, he inwardly condemns himself; when he doth well, he approves his own behaviour. This St. Paul hath in view, when he says concerning the gentiles, *When the gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts: their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts*

the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

1. The first duty then which we owe to ourselves, is to cultivate and improve that natural inclination which we have to love truth and virtue: for this is the foundation of all goodness, that we be able to distinguish truth from falsehood, that we esteem it when we have found it, and that we prefer what is right and honest to every thing that is evil and base. Unless we love truth, we shall either never find it, or, if we accidentally meet with it, we shall set no due value upon it. Truth shuns those who despise it, or becomes as useless to them as if it were quite unknown. By the assistance of truth we arrive to a knowledge of virtue, and we are taught to esteem it as we ought; they are united together: without truth there can be no virtue, and without virtue, truth is of small use.

There are an innumerable variety of truths, of which those of the greatest use and importance are, the knowledge of God and of religion, and of ourselves, and of eternal life, and of the way to happiness both here and hereafter. The gospel of Christ is frequently called the truth by the sacred writers; and above all other things it most deserveth that honourable name and character, because it surpasseth all other aids and methods for the discovering of this most valuable knowledge. Christ promised to his Apostles the Spirit of truth, who should lead them into all truth, that is, all necessary truths relating to morality and religion. Christ prays to his Father that he would sanctify them in truth, and says, that his word is truth. When he stood before Pilate, he professed that for this end he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth; and every one, says he, that is of the truth, heareth my voice. For whosoever sincerely loves the truth, and diligently seeks it, will acknowledge and receive the gospel, when Christ himself and his Apostles teach and confirm it. *We are of God, says St. John; he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us; hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* Thus the first duty which we

owe to ourselves is to love truth and virtue.

The Hebrew language hath no word which exactly answers to the word virtue; therefore this word is scarcely to be found in the writers of the New Testament. Instead of it, they say righteousness, holiness, the fear of God, and the like; by which expressions the same thing is meant. However, St. Paul in one place uses the word virtue, and recommends the love of virtue and of truth in very strong terms: *Finally, brethren, says he, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the peace of God shall be with you.* From which, and the like exhortations, it is manifest that the love of truth and virtue, which the gospel recommends and requires, is not a bare occupation of the understanding, a barren speculative inquiry concerning the nature of morality, but a practical knowledge of it dwelling in our hearts, by which, when we have found out truth, and know what is virtue, we suit our life and behaviour to our persuasion, openly profess the truth, and recommend it to others, and shew forth virtue in our manners and conversation, whatsoever inconveniences may press us, and whatsoever dangers may threaten us, for our adherence to them.

2. The gospel commands us to think modestly of ourselves, and to shew forth this modesty in our words and actions, which is called humility by Christian writers, and is founded upon a right knowledge of ourselves. When we are well acquainted with our own defects, and sensible how far short we fall of perfect goodness and knowledge, this usually produces in us dispositions to think and speak lowly of ourselves, and not ambitiously to seek employments for which we are not qualified, recompenses and respects to which we have no claim, and praises and honours which we have done nothing to deserve; this teacheth

us to acquiesce in that station wherein the providence of God hath placed us; to be moderate, and peaceable, and honest in our endeavours to advance ourselves to a better condition; and to have the public good and the interests of Christianity more in view than our own private profit. Else if any one thinketh himself to be somewhat when he is nothing, such an one, says St. Paul, deceiveth himself. By this virtue the mind is kept free from pride, insolence, vanity, self-love, and self-conceit.

However, it is to be remembered, that humility may be carried to an excess, and that by debasing ourselves too much, and giving way too tamely to oppression and insolence, or by a sheepish indolence and an over-diffidence of our abilities, we may wrong both ourselves, and our friends, and society, to which we might have

to be modest and humble, and quiet and peaceable, it is likewise our duty to be useful to mankind, and to employ whatever powers and talents God hath committed to us for the public good.

By this virtue we are disposed not to despise our inferiors, but to value the good qualities of others, and willingly to commend them; in the exercising of which duty, it is much better to think too favourably than too hardly of any person, and rather to esteem him too much than to detract from him. For although we are by no means to praise others against our own conscience, and for those accomplishments of which they are entirely and manifestly void, yet since they who in some respects are our inferiors, in other respects often equal or superiors to us, we have continual occasion to exercise humility and candour, in giving to every one all the regard and all the respect that he can reasonably desire. This behaviour the Apostles require from us: *Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God. All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, that is, on*

his own profit and interest, *but every man also on the things of others.*

3. If we would perform our part in life as becomes reasonable creatures and Christians, it is necessary that we possess in some degree the virtue called prudence, by which all other virtues are regulated and conducted, by which we are restrained from acting rashly and hastily, we weigh the circumstances of things, and then we do what certainly or probably tends to the public good. This behaviour concerns our whole life, and all our words and actions, which, unless they be accompanied with discretion and foresight, may prove pernicious to ourselves and our neighbour, though our intentions were not evil. In the Proverbs of Solomon, and in the book of Ecclesiasticus, there are many useful precepts of this kind, and our Saviour hath exhorted us to join the prudence of the serpent to the simplicity of the dove. Christian prudence is often occupied in forming right judgments of religious truths, duties, actions, and opinions. It preserves us from being imposed upon by deceitful or mistaken men, in things relating to faith or practice; it directs us to adhere to the plain word of God, as it is contained in the Scriptures, in all that we are to believe and to do. By the assistance of this virtue we prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, according to the advice of St. Paul; we believe not every spirit, as St. John admonisheth, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are come into the world. Else we might fall into numberless errors: for every age, and every nation, usually produceth a plentiful harvest of deceivers; and he who is unsteady and unwary will never want a false guide to mislead him.

4. The writers of the New Testament frequently and strictly command us to observe the rules of temperance in our food, and in all lawful pleasures and natural inclinations: by which it is not their design to deprive us of the conveniences of life, but to make us beware lest by the abuse of things innocent and useful, we should render our souls and bodies unfit to perform their several

functions; lest we should waste our fortunes, and impoverish ourselves and our dependents; and lest we should corrupt others by bad example. Therefore the gospel forbids drunkenness, debauchery, extravagance, and intemperance, and all such irregularities, and recommends chastity and sobriety: and these precepts it enjoins altogether for our own sakes, for the good of each individual, and of families, and of human society.

5. Men are so made, and such is their condition, that they who indulge themselves in laziness, will want many things necessary both for soul and body. Whatsoever state of life we be in, we cannot live reputably without labour. Therefore wise men in all times have agreed in condemning idleness, as pernicious to human nature, and a scandalous abuse of those powers and abilities which God hath conferred upon us. And there is the more reason to detest it, because sluggish people are not only destitute of the conveniences of life and of a mind capable of enjoying them, but are remarkably prone to every thing that is bad, as experience testifies. When poverty and laziness take possession of a man, lying, and cheating, and stealing, are the usual consequences, together with every kind of shameless and sordid meanness, dissingenuity, and dishonesty. Besides, the human mind is naturally restless, and occupied continually upon some object and design. It is the unavoidable consequence of being awake. Unless therefore the mind be improved by honest meditations, and employed in useful labours, it gives itself up to expensive amusements, to loose imaginations, to unlawful actions, to keeping bad company and bad hours, or to strolling from one assembly to another, or to drinking or gaming, which are very improperly called diversions and recreations, and only serve to add to the miseries and calamities of life, instead of alleviating or removing them. We have received from God a soul and a body, and we are obliged to take due care of both. The soul is to be exercised in acquiring useful knowledge, without which we shall be blinded by ignorance, and swayed by vice, and fall into many faults which

might easily have been avoided. The body is to be occupied in such exercises as may strengthen it, and make it capable of performing what the understanding recommends as proper to be done; and thus we become able to accomplish what our own nature requires, what our friends and families, and society, may justly hope and expect from us. These are the dictates of reason, and these dictates are enforced and recommended to us by the sacred writers. *This is a faithful saying, says St. Paul to Titus, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.* And again: *Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.* To maintain good works, is translated in the margin, to profess honest trades. Let every Christian be of some calling and occupation, that he may live creditably and usefully to himself and others. This precept belongs, in some sense, to all persons, to kings and nobles as well as to the poorest people, that they may know how to act suitably to their several conditions. Great revenues, and power, and honour are given or trusted to men, for no other purpose than to enable them to govern those who are committed to their hands, and to provide for the public welfare: and to perform the offices of such a station with tolerable credit and dignity, is a charge which requireth industry and application, and many good qualities. As to the bulk of mankind, the case is too clear to want proof. To such belongs the admonition of St. Paul, who having declared concerning himself, that he had often wrought with labour and travail night and day that he might not be chargeable to others, recommends to Christians the same behaviour: *If any will not work, says he, neither should he eat.* There are some who walk disorderly amongst you, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, eating their own bread.

6. There is a virtue extending itself to many parts of our Christian duty,

which is called contentedness. It is an even disposition, by which, without repining and complaining, we bear our condition though it be inconvenient; and it is founded on a firm faith and reliance upon the providence of God, and upon his veracity in performing his promises; as likewise upon a knowledge of our many defects, by which we are sensible that if God were to deal with us in strict justice, according to our deserts, our state might be much worse than it is. Whosoever firmly believes that the course of things in general, and every particular event, is guided by the divine providence, with perfect wisdom and goodness, for the good of his creatures, especially of those who serve him, will easily persuade himself that God hath reasons for which he permits some to suffer hardships, and to be exercised with adversity. These reasons he will believe to be sufficient, though perhaps he know them not in their full extent; nor will he suffer any dishonourable thoughts and hard suspicions concerning God's goodness to harbour in his mind, since God hath graciously declared that patience under affliction shall receive an ample reward in the world to come; and that those things which seem grievous to be borne, and which human nature would willingly shun, often conduce to the health of the soul, and often preserve us from many faults to which a continuance of prosperity exposeth us. The discourses of our Saviour and of his Apostles abound with exhortations to contentment under a low and inconvenient state, and with great encouragement and favourable promises to those who trust in God, and are satisfied with the portion which he allots to them. And indeed this virtue is of singular use to all who would learn to pass quietly and safely through this world to a better. He whose desires are moderate, meets with few temptations and few disappointments; but he whose heart is set upon wealth, though he possess much, is ever desiring something more, and therefore never at heart's ease; and if he meet with losses, becomes most miserable, though he still possesses what a person contented with a little would think more than sufficient, and is ready to take unjustifiable methods with a view to re-

trieve his fortunes. Of such singular advantage is it to desire no more than uncorrupted nature requires, and so greatly doth it conduce even to our present happiness. Therefore the gospel condemns not only covetousness, which, as St. Paul says, is idolatry, but a greedy desire of external advantages, of high stations, of power and worldly prosperity.

A contempt of riches is so often inculcated in the New Testament, that it seems needless to bring proofs of it. Scarcely is there any thing which is more earnestly coveted than wealth, and yet there is not any thing innocent in itself whence greater evils arise; and this is the reason why Christ requires of us not to set our hearts upon it: he required it out of mere kindness and compassion towards men, who know not what is expedient for them. For whether we have received our riches from our ancestors, or acquired them ourselves, so it happens, that through our own folly they often do us much more harm than good. They are often attended either with covetousness, or with luxury, and a vehement love of pleasure. When they are joined to covetousness, the fear of losses with which such persons are tormented is worse than poverty itself, they labour under apprehensions of evils which may never come, or which human prudence cannot prevent; they are sordid and uncharitable, and therefore disliked and despised, and they can hardly refrain from any thing mean and vile, when there is a prospect of gain. When riches are joined to luxury, such persons indeed are not slaves to their wealth, but which is rather worse, they are slaves to their passions and appetites, to a thousand follies and vices.

Not that we are to give away all our possessions, and reduce ourselves to a state of poverty, a state which hath its temptations no less than a state of superfluous abundance; only we are to remember that these things are entrusted to us, and that we must make a sober and discreet use of them, that use which God, and nature, and society, require.

7. To contentedness should be added modesty, a virtue by which we are taught never to say or do any thing which becomes not our Christian character, but to

avoid all that is rude and indecent. To this virtue relate these exhortations of St. Paul: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Fornication and all uncleanness—let it not once be named amongst you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.*

If these things are not even to be named, much less are they to be practised by Christians: and the Apostle is the more earnest in recommending this modesty in words and actions to the first believers, because the gentiles were notorious offenders in this point.

To this modesty is to be joined moderation in our apparel, and consequently in our furniture, and in all our expences. Of this St. Peter and St. Paul make some mention, and observe at the same time that the endowments of the mind are the best and fairest ornament. No precise bounds can be fixed to duties of this kind, and a reasonable latitude must be left for compliance with custom. The best general rule is to follow the example of those of our own rank and condition who are accounted wise and prudent, and free from vanity and extravagance; and these restrictions cannot be called rigid and severe, since they only forbid a profusion which is attended with numberless evils.

Lastly: In the exercise of all the fore-mentioned virtues is contained and consists the duty which is called self-denial, and which our Saviour requires from his disciples. To deny ourselves is, first, to cast off all vicious inclinations and unlawful desires; secondly, to reject and avoid every thing that we find by experience to be a temptation and an incitement to sin; and thirdly, to be willing to part with any object, if ever we should be placed in such circumstances, that either that object or our religion must be quitted.

Such is our duty to ourselves, to which we shall endeavour to conform; if we love ourselves with a rational affection, and set a just value on our better part, on our immortal soul.

S E R M O N C I V.

By BISHOP HICKMAN.

An early Piety a necessary Duty.

ECCLES. xi. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

IN this book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon calls himself the preacher, thinking it no disparagement to his royal dignity to descend from government to instruct his people. God had blessed him with the greatest wisdom, and the circumstance of his reign afforded him sufficient experience in the world; so that having observed and tried the several courses of human life, in this book he sums up all his observations, for the honour of God, and the benefit of succeeding ages. Here he has shewn us the true bounds of wisdom and folly, what is either profitable or hurtful to the sons of men; the powerful inclinations which we have to vice, and the more powerful motives to allure us to virtue. Here the ways of God are faithfully related, the nature of man is perfectly described, and the necessary connection between folly and repentance, sin and judgment, is exactly shewn. Here he recounts all the follies of his youth, and the excursions of his riper years; his fond pursuits after pleasure and mirth, women and wine, and all things which vain and inconsiderate men are apt to set their hearts upon: and he sums up all in this short sentence, *vanity of vanity, all is vanity*. Though the words of my text are principally directed to the young, yet they comprehend the whole compass of our lives, and may serve for instruction to every age; they shew us how naturally youth begins in folly and sin, which necessarily leads us to repentance in our riper years, and if continued in, brings us to judgment at our latter end. In the following discourse, I shall consider,

The inclinations of youth, and the vanity of them; which cannot be more ele-

antly expressed than in the former parts of the text, wherein Solomon artificially exposes the humour of that age, by shewing how it indulges its own fancy, and affects nothing more than a boundless, uninterrupted flow of pleasures. He knew the natural heat and giddiness of youth; how want of experience renders them incapable of advice, and impatient of contradiction or restraint; and who even take a pride in rejecting all prudence and consideration. All this the preacher knew, and therefore did not attempt to stop the young man in his course, by crossing the current of his pleasures; but he allows him the full scope and swing of his lusts, and lets him follow his own inclinations, to see what will be the end. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.* And though this at first sight seems very pleasing, yet if we view it nearer, we shall find the passage so full of danger, as rather to discourage a wise man's attempt, than invite his curiosity.

As, first; *Rejoice, O young man.* And what is joy, but folly and want of consideration? It is to give ourselves up to a heedless intemperate life, to discard our reason, lest it should reprove our vanity; is acquiring such a habit of mind as not only endangers our souls, but is unsuitable to our nature. The providence of God has dispensed to every man a mixture of good and evil in this world, and every wise man will be contented with that alloy. But if we separate the bitter from the sweet, what shall we do when we come to the bottom of the portion, where the dregs will be all bitterness, and that God besides puts trembling into our cup? A wise heathen observed, that true joy is a serious thing; and a wiser than he said of laughter, that it is madness; and of mirth, what does it? It only deludes us with false appearances of happiness, brings us into a pleasant vale, where is a snake lurking in the grass, which at last proves to be the valley of the shadow of death. Thus our pleasure leads us into a fool's paradise, and there leaves us to lament our loss of it. It seduces us from the paths of virtue and honour, into a smooth way, and then

draws a mist before our eyes, that we may not see the precipice to which it leads. It gives a loose to our passions, and banishes that wisdom which is our best guard and defence. Rejoice, O young man; but know, that whilst thou investest the tempter into thy bosom, instead of filling thy heart with joy, thou emptiest it of all thy virtue. Again,

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: but what is there in youth to occasion such rejoicing? Youth is a time of weakness and inexperience, and is generally so ill managed as to prove a reproach to our age: and is this matter of joy? Is this a proper season to rejoice, when we are sowing the seeds of a long repentance? Is this a time to trust our virtue without a guard, when our reason is weak, and our passions strong? From whence proceeds this confidence, or what can we find in our youth to create in us this assurance? Is want of understanding a happiness, or want of experience a commendation? How powerful a thing is ignorance in so perverse a thing as man? But as youth is a time of strength and vigour, for then our spirits are active and our humour gay; therefore the young man regards pleasure as his portion, and so resolves to go on, rejoicing in his lot.

And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth. That is, improve all opportunities of joy and take thy pleasure, for nature is now in its prime, and therefore enjoy the blessings of life while it is fresh and fragrant. It is true, that youth, like the spring, is a time of hopes; and yet it is only the hopes of a joyful harvest; for then is the proper time for joy; but why should we flatter ourselves with the hopes of a glorious harvest, which perhaps we may never reap? Again, youth is a time of strength and vigour. But, alas! how short, how uncertain is that time and strength! How liable is youth to be supplanted by a disease, or untimely death? All this the young man, ignorant as he is, cannot but know. But though his understanding informs him better, yet as prudence and forecast are the things he hates, he will persist to walk in the ways of his heart, whatever happens, and will not depart from the sight of his eyes, for all the good morals in the world; and therefore resolves to allow himself the full scope of his inclinations, and to run

desperately on, wheresoever his fancy will lead, or his passions drive him. But is a young man so wise as to be trusted without a guide, when age itself, with all his experience, stands in need of good advice? It is a dangerous thing for the wisest man to lean unto his own understanding; with what confidence then can the young man presume to walk in the ways of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, when his eyes, and his heart are so blind and deceitful? And yet tell him of his danger, and he will despise the information, disdain all advice, and pursue his own course, though the ways of his heart, and the folly of his eyes, lead him directly to the chambers of death.

These are the follies and dangers of youth. But if the rashness and ignorance of that age be no excuse for such a weak course of life, how much more inexcusable are they, who continue the same practice in their riper years, and carry their youthful vices with them to the grave? When experience and years have improved our reason and understanding, and given us a judgment of discretion, what a shame is it that we should deliver ourselves up to the government of our passions and lusts, and, forgetting the gravity of our age, be captivated like children with every trifling pleasure? How can we hear the voice of God, upbraiding our folly and denouncing judgment against us, and not be afraid? *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thine eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.* Which leads me to consider the restraint that religion puts upon us, and the great reason we have to comply with the apprehensions of a future judgment.

The consideration of a future judgment is enough to compound our lusts, baffle all our enjoyments, and allay the extravagant follies and heats of youth; for what comfort will he receive from all the rejoicings of his youth; or what profit will it be to him to have walked in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes; when that indecent liberty he so unseasonably used, will tend only to make his death, and the sense of his never-dying pains, the more intolerable? How dismal will be the remembrance of his sins,

when he shall consider that they brought him into this place of torment, and lost him those pleasures, *which eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived?* When the irreversible decree is once passed upon him, what would he not give to reverse the sentence? What lusts of the flesh, what pleasures of the body, what sin of the soul, would he not give up to redeem himself? Such reflections as these will aggravate our punishment, and increase the torments of hell. This is a worm in our conscience that never dies, that never goes out. A wounded spirit is the most exquisite pain; the wrath of God in judgment is what no mortal can bear: it is such a burden as the young man with all his spirit cannot remove, nor can the old hardy sinner be proof against it. For though we have hardened our hearts like the nether mill-stone, yet God can soften them again, and by putting fears and terrors into our souls, prepare them for the impressions of his wrath. Consider these things, and then rejoice, O young man, if thou darest, and let thy heart cheer thee, if it can; for to what purpose shouldst thou trust to the sight of thine eyes, or follow the ways of thine heart, when thou knowest that God will shortly bring thee to judgment; and then this heart of thine, which now flatters and betrays thee, will accuse, condemn, and torment thee?

Since then we have just reasons from our sins, to apprehend the dreadfulness of this judgment, what remains, but that we in time provide for our security, and immediately begin a wiser course of life? Surely, we will no longer trifle with God's judgments, but offer up to him our darling vices; now while we have some pleasure in them: so lively, so early a sacrifice will be accepted. But to do this when the decays of age shall come, and our pleasure abandon us, is a forced virtue, and deserves no thanks. Let us then, before it be too late, check the intemperance of our lusts, abate our immoderate desire of any pleasure, and possess our souls with more serious reflections. Let us consider that we are the offspring of heaven, of a divine extraction, and sent by God into this world to govern and subdue our sinful appetites. Let us correct the extravagance of our ways, and make God's law our

only rule. Let us so rejoice in our youth, that in our riper years, and when old age comes, we may long for that time when God shall bring us into judgment, and then receive our doom with comfort. And that we may the more effectually proceed herein, it may be proper to consider this kind memento of Solomon: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* And a plain interpretation of these words will lead us to a practical application of what has been said. And,

First, The remembrance of our Creator obliges us to pay him that love and obedience, which is the natural tribute of his mercy. Whatsoever we enjoy is the bountiful gift of his goodness, the product of his creation, and therefore it should remind us of our great Benefactor. The world is a register or catalogue of his noble acts; in the volume of this book we may read in beautiful characters the name of God; and that infinite is his mercy, and wonderful his works. With what admirable order and convenience has he created this world, making it fit for our entertainment, and every creature therein, to serve for our nourishment, ornament, or defence! so that if we do not forget ourselves, we must needs remember our Creator, and acknowledge his just title to our obedience. And who so deserving to command, as he that created man? Who so proper to give us laws, as he who knows the secrets of our hearts? And therefore, with a ready compliance to his commands, and a resigned submission to his will, we should remember our Creator, and confess, that as it is our happiness to be created, so it is our honour to be commanded by him.

Secondly, We should remember our Creator with fear and reverence. There is so much majesty in the name of Creator, as should strike an awful dread into our hearts, and create a reverence within us; we should fall down and kneel before him when we remember the Lord our maker. No submission can be too low; if we humble ourselves to the dust, it is but from whence he raised us up; and if he has exalted us to a higher station, we should therefore pay him the honour. But

unto his name. And if God has given us beauty and strength, the vigour of youth, and opportunities of pleasure, let us not in the enjoyment of these good things forget that God who created both them and us; lest we should provoke his wrath, whose power is mighty to destroy, as well as to create.

Thirdly, When we remember our Creator we should also pay him a religious and holy worship, which is the natural result of his power and mercy, the genuine composition of our love and fear; and what can we his creatures do less, than fall down and worship him for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life? This is what we properly call the service of God, and which all nations in the world have acknowledged to be his due; even a very heathen has observed, "That no nation was ever so barbarous, as to live without religion; or so foolish, as to hope for the goods of the earth, without paying their devotion to the gods in heaven." Thus, we see that an obedient, devout, religious life, is what Solomon advises us to, in these words, *Remember thy Creator*. But though this is a matter of very weighty importance, and of the utmost concern to us, yet our giddy minds are apt to adjourn the consideration of it till old age, or that some kind affliction has brought us to a better way of thinking. I shall therefore consider the time when this duty is to be performed.

And the wise man's direction is, remember now thy Creator, this very instant, delay not so necessary a duty, since we can call no day our own but the present; and if we do not remember our Creator now, it may be feared we never shall. The time past is already dead, the time to come is yet unborn, but the present is our life, and the living they shall praise God. If a religious life be ever a duty, it is so now, this very moment; and therefore, without the greatest presumption, we cannot defer it till to-morrow. The very first grounds and principles of religion, teach us to worship and serve God all the days of our lives. And God knows the service of every day requires our most serious endeavour, and all that the morrow can do, is to take care of the things of itself. Therefore, remember ^{all} ^{therefore} ^{the} ^{full} ^{scope} Creator now, and trifle not away the

present time, but make every day a pattern of thy whole life; perform thy duty, and make up thy accounts every night, so wilt thou be always ready to appear before God.

But some will say, that perhaps now is an unseasonable time; it may be the prime of our youth, and what need we be so early called to our duty? No, says the preacher, you must remember thy Creator now, in the days of thy youth; to defer it may be too late, therefore obey the first summons: and the more early thou attendest thy duty, the better it will be accepted, and the easier performed. Dedicate unto God the first fruits of thy life, and that will make all thy succeeding years holy and happy; offer up to him devout sacrifices in the spring of thy age, and he will bless thee with many fruitful harvests. This is the most proper time to frame and model our minds according to the will of God; for now our faculties are fresh and vigorous, our wills compliant, and our understandings free from prejudice. At these tender years we shall receive impressions with ease, and by use retain them. But if we suffer our vices to grow into habits, they will soon triumph over our virtue, and sin and death will quickly get dominion over us. It is therefore for our ease, as well as security, to apply ourselves betimes to that work, which by delay gets advantage over us every moment. Therefore let us speedily correct and reform our errors, and turn from all our evil ways, for they lead to the chambers of death.

There are others who think, that as death commonly gives warning before he strikes, by some diseases or natural decays, to admonish us of our approaching end, that it will be then time enough to redeem our souls, when the days are evil; directly contrary this to the advice of Solomon, who bids us remember our Creator, before those evil days come. For what commendation is it, to grow virtuous by force, to be frighted into our duty, and never leave our sins till they have forsaken us? What merit is there in a rebel's laying down his arms, when he can hold them no longer? Therefore let us remember our Creator before we are driven to the last extremity, lest our forgetfulness of God should force him to strike us

with a sudden destruction, and not give us time to pray that we may die the death of the righteous.

Lastly, The sensual man has yet one more pretence; that as there is a time for all things, therefore old age is the most proper season for such a melancholy mortifying work. Indeed, had we nothing else to do than only to repent, a sick or death-bed might serve our turn; but it is not repentance only, but amendment that is required; not only a death unto sin, but a life unto righteousness; and to this duty we must come with vigour, and cheerfully undertake the work.

We must remember our Creator before those years draw nigh, when a man shall say, I have no pleasure in them. We must not make our devotion an act of necessity, but of choice. God expects a free-will offering, the prime of our flocks, the richest of our treasures. But if we consume these upon our lusts, and assign him the refuse of our years, we may expect him to send us for our reward, to those Gods whom we have chosen in our prosperity, and let them deliver us out of our distress, if they can.

But it is a great mistake to think, that pleasure is inconsistent with religion, and that there is no difference between a sour and a sober life: nay, it is a great disparagement to God, and a discouragement to all good men, to pretend that there is no piety but in a gloomy soul, and a dejected countenance. In our repentance we mourn, and with just reason, but in the acts of obedience, why reserved and grave? In the exercises of devotion, *why so heavy, O my soul, why so disquieted within me?* Surely, to live always in a state of penance, is no good symptom in any man, no great sign of religion; for it can be no commendation of his piety to be always grieving, but yet never to repent.

True religion was, no doubt, designed to improve our nature, to complete our happiness; and to shew man in his true perfection: to fill us with exalted thoughts, to entertain us with lively notions and generous desires: that we should *serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.* It is not so much the formality of the tribute as the willing mind and the cheerful giver that

God respects; but what pleasure can he possibly have in those services of ours, which we ourselves have no pleasure in? If therefore we find ourselves in health and strength, plentiful in our fortunes, and vigorous in our minds, let us not prostitute these noble gifts of God to profane ungodly uses; and think they were given us only to make provision for our flesh, and to fulfil our lusts; and when all is gone, that then it is time enough to return unto God. But when we enjoy our hearts desire, then let us deem it the properest season to pay him our devotion; for when we are most fit for pleasure, then are we fittest for religion; then is our heart a noble sacrifice indeed, and worthy of our Creator; a present fit to be made to the great God of heaven and earth, because with such sacrifices he is well pleased. But if it is unfortunately broken with age, and bruised with iniquity, yet even then it is the best we have to give, and a *bruised broken heart, is a sacrifice that God will not despise.* Therefore, whatever our circumstances are, whether we are in health, or lie under any affliction, calamity, or decay, let us take care to hasten our repentance and redeem the time, because the days are evil.

SERMON CV.

By BISHOP HICKMAN.

The great Duty of Self-knowledge.

PSALM ix. 10.

Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know themselves to be but men.

WHEN God created the heaven and the earth, and distinguished the whole creation, in their several orders and degrees, he placed man in the middle region, between himself and the inferior world, that we might obey the one and command the other. And in order to the preserving our respect towards God, and our government towards the creatures, he gave us laws to instruct and direct our conduct in that course of life, on which all our wisdom and happiness depends. But

through our perverseness or simplicity, many temptations are apt to divert us from the right way; for either a vain desire of greatness, or an excessive love of riches and pleasures, make us forget our duty to God; and instead of walking in the ways of wisdom, our eyes are so blinded with ambition, covetousness, and luxury, that we degenerate into something less than man.

To prevent this fatal miscarriage, God has enforced his laws by many gracious promises, to invite us to our duty, and many dreadful threatenings, to deter us from evil. When the one proves ineffectual, he will execute the other. If we are so hardened and stupid, that nothing but judgments can awaken us, God will send his terrors among us, to make us know him; and his judgments, to know ourselves. As therefore the knowledge of ourselves is a religious duty, I shall endeavour to shew the excellency and usefulness of this knowledge.

There are indeed some who think for man to know himself, is of all knowledge the most delightful and easy. But this proceeds from our ignorance: for, alas! though we can with ease gaze round us, be very intent upon remote concerns, yet all the while we may be utterly unacquainted with ourselves. Besides, it is an unpleasant thing for a man to look into himself, to rake into the filthiness of his own heart, and discompose the quiet of his mind; hence it is that so many men take up with a superficial and false account of their own affairs, and are often most pleased with themselves, when they have the least reason for it. And however we may think that this fond conceit of our own worth is only an innocent allowable mistake; yet, upon examination, we shall find it such a dangerous error and disposition of mind as will disable us from performing our several duties; for it is giving up our reason to be guided by fantasy and humour.

He that will not take the pains to know himself, lives, as it were, by chance, and moves without design. He embraces vice or virtue as they best suit his fancy or convenience; but seldom considers the excellency of his nature, or the good pleasure of his God. Thus when a conceited man has lost himself, it is impossible he should maintain his proper sta-

tion in life, or observe decency and justice towards men, but he will be apt to encroach upon their rights and liberties; and we must ascribe all that insolence, imposition, and violence in the world, to this ignorant self-love. We may as well expect meekness from a lion, as common justice from one conceited of his own worth, and full of himself. He that thinks himself something more than man, will not look upon others as his fellow-creatures, but takes a pleasure and pride in despising and treating them like despicable worms.

From whence proceed, in general, all heresies and schisms in the church, all tumults and factions in the state; but from this ignorance and carnal pride, this exalting ourselves above measure, and undervaluing every ordinance of God and man? But had we the sense to consider, or the grace to understand, what we are; we shall appear to be only a load of infirmities, a lump of flesh wherein our spirits are imprisoned and confined. For God knows what worthless senseless creatures we are; having nothing to boast of, but what we received from him; nothing but our humility to recommend us to God or man. For what is our wisdom, goodness, and greatness, to value ourselves upon? Who-soever does so, knows not what it is to be wise, great, or good. In short, it is nothing but ignorance that makes us so fond of admiring ourselves, which occasions all the decays of virtue, religion, and government in the world; and proves how necessary a duty, and great virtue it is, for men to know themselves. In order to our obtaining this knowledge, we ought to consider both our nature and end.

We must consider our own nature, the value and station we bear in the world; that so our behaviour may be decent and agreeable thereto. Hence some compare this world to a stage, where every person is to act conformably to his place and character. A prince should not degrade himself to those mean performances which are fit and proper in a peasant; nor a subject usurp the style or affect the figure of a prince. But much more absurd it is for ignorant man, born in weakness and sin, the son of corruption, and brother to the worms, to aspire unto the throne of

God, assume to himself absolute power, and to think he is more than man; and no less shameful is it, that man, who is born lord of this world, heir of eternity, companion of angels, and representative of God on earth, should submit to sordid mean desires, make himself less than man, even level to the beasts that perish. It behoves us therefore to consider our nature and constitution, that we may seek after those things that are agreeable to them. If our souls are our better part, and immortal, it requires our greatest care, as being an eternal good.

We ought also to study our own inclinations, that we may know how to apply the advantage of religion, to the exigencies of our souls. For there is no man so perfectly virtuous, but he has a tendency to some vice; nor is there scarce any so profligate in vice, who has not some remains of virtue. If therefore we know ourselves, and our inclinations to good and evil, we may by degrees gain ground upon our vices. Some sparks of virtue, that lie covered, may with a little care be blown up into a glorious flame: and we ought to cherish these remains of goodness, and propagate the seeds of virtue. If we are hardened by sin, we may find some tender part capable of good impressions, and by degrees reduce the whole. Let us but learn to know ourselves, see how we stand affected towards the vanities and vices of the world, and we shall soon discover our failings, which is the first and great step towards a remedy; for then we are only to use our diligence and care, to subdue those vices which are most predominant, and to set a double guard on our weakest side. But if we give the devil an opportunity to assault us, when unprepared, he wants neither subtlety nor malice to take advantage, and pursue it to our ruin. Our principal care and design should therefore be to conquer our favourite sins and darling lusts, and then we shall find no difficulty in all the rest.

And yet how common is it, for men to neglect this, and bend their forces another way; to fortify themselves against remoter dangers, those lusts they have no inclination to; but as for their beloved sin, that has taken shelter in their bosoms, to cherish and keep it up, in defiance of cor-

rection or reproof. Hence it is, that many men in appearance live very regular and zealous lives, and comply with all the outward exercises of religion, and yet there is no alteration in their lives, where it is most wanted. This is what turns godliness into formality, and frustrates the design of religion. This want of knowing ourselves, is the only cause why so many people make outward profession of the gospel, and yet are inwardly never the better. But,

In order to know ourselves, we must consider the end we aim at; and usually there are two sorts of ends to direct our actions, an ultimate, and an intermediate end. For every considerate man proposes to himself some principal ultimate end; some universal main design, which he pursues in all his thoughts and actions, and makes the centre of his happiness. Thus one man proposes honour for his portion, another chuses riches, a third pleasure; and but very few are there who delight in virtue and religion; for when men once fix their choice on the meaner concerns of this world, they scarce think upon any thing else. Indeed, he that proposes to lead a virtuous religious life, may desire a competency of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world; but then he quits them all when they are inconsistent with his religion. And this last end is most desirable, because we undertake the rest for the sake of that.

And now let every man seriously ask himself this important question: What end he proposes to himself, or what his business is in the world? The ambitious man will answer, to be great and honourable. But surely to come into the world like a comet, to be admired by the vulgar, and despised by the wise, is below the dignity of a reasonable creature. Perhaps another will say, that his business here is only to take pleasure; but does not his being here depend on God's pleasure, and his well-being on the protection of the laws, and the good of the commonwealth? and if so, ought he not in gratitude, in prudence, and in conscience, to conform to the pleasure of God, and to be useful to the state, and not to make his pleasure his law, and his belly his God? Another will perhaps say, that his designs are only to grow rich; but this is a ma-

nifest absurdity and contradiction. For if he would grow rich to promote the honour or pleasure of himself, or his posterity, then honour or pleasure is his principal end, and riches are only means thereto; but if he would grow rich for the sake of riches, he is then the most indigent and despicable man alive: being poorer to all the ends of riches than he that has got nothing. Thus we see, that neither riches, pleasures, nor honours, those idols of the world, can be the principal end which a wise man proposes to himself; for a man in the highest honours may be discontented, and not without reason; a man of pleasure may be condemned, and not to be wondered at; and a man of great riches may be miserable, even to a proverb.

Since then none of these things can be the ultimate design, the proper objects of our wishes; what is it we should desire but to be happy? and as these vanities cannot be our real happiness, we must study to be wise, that we may enjoy happiness. We must leave these amusements to the world, to the heathen who do not know themselves, no more than they do that God that made them. We must find out some other end more suitable to our nature, more worthy of our pains; which can only be the service of our God, and the salvation of our souls. Here we must fix our hopes and make all our actions tend; there being no other way to reconcile our worldly cares to reason or common sense, but by making them subservient to religion. Then we may desire riches for the greater opportunity of doing good upon earth, in hopes of obtaining a greater reward in heaven. Then we may use innocent pleasures for the preservation and refreshment of life; in order to obtain a better inheritance hereafter. Then we may fairly desire honour and reputation in the world, that by an illustrious example of virtue to others, it may be the means of saving our own souls. It is this last end, that encourages and justifies all the rest. Take away the eternal weight of glory, and how frivolous, how insignificant are all these momentary pleasures? or what will it profit us *to gain the whole world, and lose our own souls.*

Having thus discovered what our pro-

per end is, let us next inquire what progress and advances we have made towards the salvation of our souls; for with all the wisdom of men, too few are wise enough to do their duty. They see the glorious prize before them, yet will not run so as to obtain, but slothfully acquiesce in the formalities of religion, and in an unactive faith, as if that was enough to carry us to heaven. It is strange indeed, that we should know religion, and the value of our precious souls so well, and yet live as we do. Our Saviour speaks of taking heaven by violence, to shew what labours and difficulties a good Christian should undergo, to procure the salvation of his soul; but we, by our unconcerned behaviour in this point, seem to expect that heaven should commit a violence upon us. The Apostles and primitive martyrs endured the severest persecutions, imprisonments, and deaths, as examples for our imitation; and yet we can hear all this without the least remorse. The angels rejoice in heaven over every sinner that repenteth; and yet we have no joy but in our sins. Our blessed Saviour relinquished the bosom of his Father, and submitted to a most indigent life, and shameful death; and yet we, who were the cause of this, are neither ashamed nor troubled about it. Surely, he did not make himself so poor, only to make us rich, nor bestow temporal honours upon us, only to gratify our ambition; these are below the dignity of the gospel; prizes too mean for the Son of God to purchase, or the sons of men to desire. Much less did he take up his cross, that we might indulge ourselves in sensual delights. This is a contradiction to all religion. But he did it that we might learn to follow the captain of our salvation, by a laborious virtue, in order by our victory to obtain a crown of glory.

Since then ambition, covetousness, and lust, are those corrupted principles from whence all vicious practices grow and increase upon us, and this chiefly for the want of knowing ourselves; I will now more particularly consider, how it is that these bad principles hinder this knowledge in us.

The first vice which dazzles our eyes, and hinders us from knowing ourselves, is ambition; a vice to which mankind

has too natural an inclination; and with this bait the devil tempted the first man. When our desires take their rise from proper grounds, and are directed to proper ends, there is a virtue in ambition. We may study to be alike God in wisdom, if we can; and in goodness if we please. But when we aim to be like him in power, and to be above restraint, then there is vanity in the inclination, and danger in the attempt, which makes ambition a vice. Thus the angels fell; who by endeavouring to exalt themselves, were miserably degraded, and degenerated into accursed spirits. And yet neither the angels nor our fore-fathers' fall, can terrify us from the like presumption; but we will be still bordering upon their guilt, and flattering ourselves that we are something more than men. We first learn to despise our fellow-creatures; and from thence ambition soars aloft, and teaches us to defy our God; to value ourselves upon rejecting his commands, and to think we are very great, for daring to be very wicked. This sin of ambition is the first inlet to vice. For the sake of this idol, this mere phantom, men are contented to sacrifice their own peace, and the quietness of the world, to build trophies on the ruins of other men, only to stand a little higher in the eye and admiration of the people.

When ambition leads a man on, every virtue must submit to him; both justice and mercy must give way to his violent rage. If he can but get the superiority, and appear like God, he cares not what destruction he brings on man, or how he disturbs the course of nature. From hence tumults and factions, slaughters and desolations take their rise: for when a pampered ambition prevails, hatred and malice, rancour and revenge, like a destroying army, attend its motions, and execute its designs. And can any man pretend to know himself, who ventures on such an enterprize? For, alas! how easily are we crushed in the height of all our pride; God need not with his thunder to cast us down; since one blast of his air, one breath of his displeasure will undo us. If he only withholds our breath we die, and all our enterprizes fall to the ground. Is this our glory, this our pride? how contemptible is designing

man, who mistakes his honour, and does not know himself? does not know that there is neither device nor wisdom in the grave, whither he is going. Let us not then rejoice in flattering ourselves that we are like gods upon earth; but that our names are written in the book of heaven. Let us not boast that we have made many men subject to our power; but that we have overcome the perverseness of our wills, subdued our unruly passions, and are grown so wise, as to know, and so great as to command ourselves.

The second corrupted principle, which debauches our nature, and hinders us from knowing ourselves, is covetousness, or an immoderate love of wealth. In ambition there is something of generosity, but covetousness is perfectly vile and sordid. Ambition is an overflowing of the spirit, but covetousness sinks us below the flesh. It is burying ourselves alive, and anticipating the curse which God denounced upon us, *dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*. It is making us less than the worms, the lowest of all the creatures; they only grovel in the dust to satisfy their nature, and provide themselves with food; but covetous man rakes without measure, and scrapes without design, and never thinks he has got dust enough, till he returns to it himself; his appetite is never satisfied till his mouth is stopt. It is this that occasions all that fraud, extortion, oppression, and falsehood, that is practised among us. *Covetousness is the root of all evil.*

How wonderful is it then, that man should not know what it is to be a man, nor how to answer the ends of his nature; which most certainly are to improve in wisdom, and to grow in grace, till our spirits are so refined as to be fit to appear before God. But can this end be promoted by our growing rich? all our labour of this kind tends the direct contrary way; it is stifling our spirits under ground in the mines, when our thoughts should be soaring up on high. *Therefore, says the wise man, get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding; for wisdom is much better than gold, and understanding rather to be chosen than silver.* So many absurdities and contradictions are involved in

this one single vice, that, did not we see it practised, we should scarce believe that a man should labour for he knows not what, and save it for he knows not whom. If we view his income, he would seem the most selfish man in nature; but if we consider his expence, he is certainly the most self-denying man alive.

But there is another powerful principle of vice within us, which hinders us from knowing ourselves, and from pursuing our proper end; and that is lust, or an immoderate desire of pleasure. There is nothing so easily imposed upon as a man of pleasure; for he judges of things only by his sense, which is the most deceitful judge in nature. How shameful is it for a man to set aside his reason and virtue, his understanding and religion, and devote himself to a slothful sensual life? To be so unacquainted with himself, and forgetful of his soul, as to employ all his time to entertain his body? But we are too apt to get into a habit of sensuality before we are aware, and to like it we know not why.

However, I would not be thought to undertake so needless and unnecessary a work, as to persuade men from pleasure in general, since God not only allows, but allots it for our use; nor would I absolutely condemn even the pleasures of sense, or set nature and religion at variance. My only intention is, to shew, that what we call pleasure, is not really so, but only a childish fluttering state of life, too light and airy to build any solid satisfaction upon. We think it agreeable to our nature, but this is a mistake; for it first debauches that before we can approve it: and then what we call our nature, is nothing but our corruption; so that we are first corrupted, and then destroyed. And therefore, since our pleasures are not to be extinguished in us, it is absolutely necessary that they should be regulated and reformed; so that our pleasure may be agreeable not only to our sense, but to the principles of our reason and religion, and consistent with our happiness.

Thus we have considered the three vicious corrupted principles within us, which make us forsake the law of our nature, and the commandments of God, and keep us from knowing ourselves;

namely, ambition, covetousness, and lust. With one or other of these vices every man in some measure is possessed; and it is our duty to find out which of them it is, that by knowing our darling sin, where our death and danger lies, we may correct and put a stop to the growing evil, before it becomes desperate. And we cannot but observe of all those vices, that though they may divert us for a time, and give some present deceitful satisfaction, yet they can never settle us in a state of ease and happiness. An ambitious man is above, and a luxurious man beside himself. He who is truly virtuous and contented, is the only man that, under all the turns of fortune in this world, maintains his station, and stands his ground. He neither flies too high, through a vain ambition, nor descends too low, through covetousness or sensual lusts; but with an equal temper of mind, and a perfect indifferency to all things human, he enjoys the smiles and despises the frowns of fortune; he is undisturbed at the course of this world, is unmoved at the chances and motions of this transitory life, because he has a dearer concern, a better portion in the world to come.

Was such a man, so established in virtue and settled in his principles, but seriously to reflect on the common practices and folly of the world; would his better thoughts, his diviner contemplations, give him leave to see with what eagerness, hurry, and zeal, the men of this world strive to ruin themselves and others; how they will alike trample upon the necks of friend and foe, to promote some little paltry vile designs; how would he stand amazed at this world, and conclude that hell itself could not be a more wicked place? When he sees with what fury, malice, and revenge, they persecute those who dare oppose the interests of their ambition, covetousness, or lust; how earnestly would he pray, that God would deliver him from such a savage race? How zealously would he wish to enjoy some private retirement, where he may enjoy calmer days, and in perfect serenity of mind, taste the sweets and relish the joys of a quiet conscience and a favourable God? In this happy state, he will find riches, honours, and pleasures in abundance; such pleasures

as the sensual man never heard of; such riches as the covetous man never saw; such honours as the ambitious man can never possess: perfect peace and tranquillity of mind, undoubted security and establishment of heart, are the certain portion of that man who knows himself, and fears his God.

But if our ambition, covetousness, or lusts have so far got the ascendancy of us, as that religion can make no impression upon us; then God will find such other ways to work upon us, as we shall soon repent of. If our hearts are never so hardened, yet there are two arrows of God that will be sure to reach us; calamity and death. Calamity is one effectual method which God uses to make us know ourselves. When he strips us of all our gaudy plumes, and sends us despicable and almost naked into that world where we before took so much pride, then we shall not only know, but despise and condemn ourselves for our past folly. When poverty and shame come upon us, and deprive us of that armour which our ambition and covetousness hath clothed us with; then we shall wish for the breast-plate of righteousness, and the sword of the spirit; and confess that one grain of faith is better than many talents of gold and silver; than all that pomp which our ambition can desire, than all that treasure which our covetousness could rake up, or our luxury squander away. When our haughty looks shall be brought down, our deceitful honours taken from us, we shall no more trust to the smiles of fortune, nor believe the flatteries of men; but learn impartially to examine the condition of our souls, and see how unhappy that man must be who does not chuse virtue for his ornament, and God for his defence. Prosperity is deceitful; but adversity gives us a full view, and free access to our own bosoms, and shews what is there amiss; it corrects the swellings of our hearts, assuages the overflowing of our pride, and plainly proves, that there is no true genuine pleasure but in being virtuous; no solid greatness, but in being humble; that the way to be happy men is to *know ourselves to be but men*.

The last method of Providence to reclaim us, and make us know ourselves, is

death. When this sad spectacle holds the glass, and shews our ghastly face, then to our sorrow we shall see of what we are made, and to what we must return. When this body of ours, upon which we have bestowed so much pains, at the expence of our precious souls, is now sinking into nothing, how will all our pride and pleasure die before us? We shall then be convinced that we must die like men, and soon become dust and ashes. To what purpose then should we contrive mighty projects, and lay vast designs, when death may overtake us in the height of our vanity, and stifle our ambition in the birth. Alas! what a tame inoffensive thing is man, when death has laid his hands upon him! The very apprehension of death checks our extravagance, allays our heats, subdues our unruly wills, suppresses our vicious affections, and brings our minds into temper, and our hearts into a proper frame. But then we must have these apprehensions of death in time, lest it be too late; lest it does not lead us to a new life, but carry us to a dreadful judgment, where we shall be made to know ourselves to our eternal sorrow and shame.

SERMON CVI.

On the Passions, and how to govern them.

ACTS, xxiv. 15.

We also are men of like passions with you.

THE great business of religion is to mortify our lusts by the help of grace, and subdue our passions, those infirmities of our nature, and bring them into subjection to the Holy Spirit, whose fruits are *love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance*; and yet after all the advances we can make in virtue, the best proficient in grace may say with the disciples of nature, *we also are men of like passions with you*. These words were spoken by Paul and Barnabas to the men of Lycaonia, to convince them they were not gods, and to restrain the people from offering sacrifices to them; a very modest, true, and ingenuous confession.

And yet perhaps it may seem strange, that an Apostle, renewed by the Holy Ghost, and endued with all the graces of the gospel, should make such an open profession of his passions, to the great disparagement of those other gifts. For as passion is a violent assault upon our reason, a turbulent motion in our hearts, if this must still take place, in spite of all the assistances of the spirit, where is that meekness, gentleness, and temperance, which are the ornaments and essentials of a Christian life? But so it is, that the best of men are subject to passions and infirmities; this is a truth which all good men are not ashamed to confess, and none but bad men will deny.

Indeed, when we come to heaven, we shall shake off these distempers of our nature, and our souls will be purified and refined; but whilst we are in the body, they are too deeply rooted in our senses for either our religion or reason to extirpate. Moses, the meekest of men, slew an Egyptian in his anger; David, the devoutest of men, was in his devotion transported with anger; our Saviour, the most patient of men, was once overwhelmed with sorrow; and even the apostles tell the heathens, that they were men of like passions with them; by which it appears that religion was designed only to improve and not extinguish nature. It was this very point that raised a controversy between two famed sects of antient philosophers; the one was for governing and keeping under the passions of man; and their design was good: the other required that they should be totally abolished and extirpated; but this was impracticable. They were not contented with the nature God had given them, but were for new making man after an image of their own. By this great mistake they rendered their lives uncomfortable, and their doctrine disagreeable; and by their philosophy proved, that nature may be managed, but cannot be forced. And yet were it possible for a man to force his nature, and divest himself of passion, it is a question whether this be desirable; since our souls would be very flat and insipid without them. Our reason would be too weak to support our virtue, and man would at best be a heavy unactive creature, without our passions to encourage and excite us to good works.

But to this a stoic may object, that our passions incline us to evil as well as good, which betray us into sin and danger, and therefore ought to be rooted out. Indeed, it must be owned, that all our sins proceed from some misguided passion; but God made us subject to those passions for the exercise of our religion, that by a right management of ourselves, between our vicious inclinations to chuse the evil, and our religious endeavours to pursue the good, we might try our obedience, and recommend our virtue. Did we lie under a natural necessity of doing good, what honour would our good works bring to God? And if we had no temptation to evil, what praise would the avoiding it bring to ourselves? The difficulty and danger of the enterprise is what makes it honourable; for without opposition, there can be no conquest. But it may be said that our passions make us more liable to evil than to good; and more likely to be conquered than to conquer. And yet this is no argument for our passions to be rooted out, since we find it recorded in scripture, that the best men have been subject to the greatest failings, the sense of which has made them the greater saints. No man was more exemplary in his virtue than David, and none more notorious in his vice. No man more glorious in his undertakings than St. Peter, and none more shameful in his falls. And as the excellencies of these men have done more honour to God, and service to the church, than their failings; therefore we ought not to extirpate our passions, and so destroy the good and evil together.

To this may be objected, that we deserve to be punished for the evil, but not to be rewarded for the good: and as our passions occasion both, were they discarded it would be better for us. To which I answer, that God in the judgment which he passes on men, will no doubt make allowance for their different constitutions. He knows whereof we are made, and that every man's constitution inclines him strongly to some one passion or other. And if we think that he expects the same from all persons, this would be to make him act arbitrarily by us, and not according to our ability. For instance; the scripture does not tell us that God ex-

pects the same temper of mind, the same evenness and steadiness of temper, from a sanguine man, as he does from the cold and phlegmatic; or that he requires the same fervent zeal, and ardour of devotion, from the phlegmatic, as he does from the warm and sanguine. Though both are obliged to struggle with their infirmities, yet nature will be nature still, and fall we shall sometimes. And we cannot but admire the excellency of the gospel above all other religions, for being exactly calculated to the nature and abilities of men, requiring nothing of us, as necessary to salvation, but what we are able to perform. It gives us the best encouragement to be virtuous, and yet does not condemn us for every vice; it shews the true way to subdue our passions, and then offers us a pardon for those we could not overcome.

Indeed, our Saviour's coming upon earth and dying for us, plainly intimates that there are vicious principles within us which cannot be subdued; for had we not lain under a moral impossibility of avoiding sin, we needed not so extraordinary a redemption. And after the gospel was preached on earth, how many frailties of the apostles do we find recorded? frailties of men inspired by the Holy Ghost; frailties of those very men who are proposed to us as most eminent examples of piety and religion. How many frailties has St. Peter recorded of himself in St. Mark's gospel? How many more do we read of him and his brethren in the Acts of the Apostles? How hot was the contest between him and St. Paul, who withstood him to the face? How sharp was the dispute between St. Paul and Barnabas? In my text we find them both promoting the honour of God like friends, and modestly declaring they were subject to passions like other men; which they soon after verified, being so angry with each other, that they parted. And why do these things stand upon perpetual record in God's book, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, but for our notice, and to inform us, that there is nothing perfect upon earth; that they who have the most grace, will still retain a taint of their nature; that though our virtue be ever so strongly guarded, yet some passion or other will frequently creep in.

From hence we may learn, not to cast off our trust in God, nor yet be discouraged from performing the duties of religion, though our passions shall sometimes break in upon us; for this they did on the apostles themselves. And if we could be but men of like virtues, we need not be uneasy that we are of like passions with them. We are also to take care that we not condemn other men for passions, though they are not the same to which we are subject. For we are men of like passions with them, if not the same; and ought to judge favourably of their failings, as we hope God will of ours.

Another instruction we may learn from these words, is, that it is not for the reputation of our religion, to dissemble or deny those passions we are possessed of, though we could thereby gain honour to ourselves. The apostles Paul and Barnabas, having wrought a miraculous cure upon an impotent man at Lystra, the people concluded they were gods, and were preparing sacrifices for them. Had the apostles been ambitiously inclined, they had a fair opportunity to be deified. But they not only modestly and zealously disclaimed the title of God, but proclaimed their own failings; *we also are men of like passions with yourselves*. Hence may those who affect to be esteemed godly men, without sin or passion, receive very proper instruction; they may here learn, that virtue and humility, modesty and piety, must always go together. Certainly there is no sin so odious as hypocrisy; no passion so dangerous, as when concealed. And yet were the dishonour, danger, and disgrace of hypocrisy only to ourselves, it would not be so criminal. But it reflects upon religion also, and makes it despicable in the sight of men, by which God is dishonoured.

We are too apt to be puffed up with pride; God has therefore instituted a holy religion, on purpose to humble us, to shew us the vileness of our nature, to convince us of the malignity of our sins, that we may give God the glory, and take shame unto ourselves.

Our passions are a demonstration that we are men. For which reason God has inseparably annexed them to our nature,

and made them a necessary condition of our mortality; and there is no living in this world without them. A religion that does open violence to our nature can never gain credit in the world, or be thought to come from God, who gave us life and being. To bid a man throw off all his passions, never to be angry, or sorry, or afraid, is a command that never came from God. Indeed, he has given us some restraining precepts, as not to be angry unto sin; not to be sorrowful as men without hope; not to be afraid where no fear is. But absolutely to renounce these passions is more than God commands, because it is more than man can do; nay, more than our Saviour did. In truth, whoever pretends to be void of passion, must be either more or less than man. But for us, who are really subject to passions, to conceal them, that we may be thought like gods, is the only way to make us proud and arrogant, crafty and malicious. The sum of all is this; God has put passions into our nature for several useful ends; but as the best things in nature are liable to be abused, so are our passions. We must therefore endeavour to correct and keep them under; but to extirpate them is impossible, and to conceal them dangerous.

Having thus seen that our passions cannot be rooted out, and ought not to be disguised, we are next to consider, how they may be so managed as to be serviceable to religion. And if we would have our passions useful to us, we must take care that they be well regulated, subdued, and governed: or otherwise they will be of no service to us. And the best way to do this, will be seriously to reflect on the passions we are guilty of, and consider the many inconveniences which the excess of them exposes us to. How uneasy and vexatious they are to ourselves, how reproachful and hateful to others! how they debar us from the use of our reason, silence all the precepts of religion, run us headlong upon all kind of dangers, and so furiously assault us, as scarce to leave us the command of our senses! Surely this is enough to make us afraid and ashamed of being blindly or madly led by them. And yet they are generally raised about trifles, or mere bubbles; it is those we pursue with

much eagerness and affection. And is it not surprising, to see a man restless and fretful, impatient and clamorous, for such trifling things; to be almost as zealously solicitous and as really concerned for them, as if his life was at stake? Nay, were they of much greater value, it cannot excuse us, for so vehement a pursuit, so hot a contention. Though it be the honour of God, and the interest of religion, that we are contending for, yet even here, by an imprudent management of our passions, we may prejudice a good cause. For certainly, without moderation, we neither do honour to God, nor service to religion. A zeal for truth must be expressed by such passion as is consistent with meekness, gentleness, and peace. In a word, whatever the occasion be, we must never suffer the passion to overpower our reason, but our business is, so to temper and manage it, as to keep it under. And when our passions are thus subdued, they are fit to be employed in the service of God, and may be useful to us in the exercises of religion: which brings me to consider how our passions should be employed.

The passions of men are a sort of evil spirit within us, that is too easily raised, and may do much hurt, if we do not find them some proper objects to work upon; and these are no where to be had but in religion. Here our passions may be of excellent use; either to promote our virtue, or increase our devotion. Certain it is, that when our passions are well regulated and reformed, they are great assistances and encouragements to virtue. Our reason is a cold heavy principle, that slowly moves us to our work; but passion puts an eagerness into our desires, warmth into our prosecutions, and makes business go cheerfully and vigorously on. Whenever therefore we find ourselves passionately engaged in the pursuit of our temporal affairs, in the advancing of our wealth, or promoting our pleasure; let us consider how much greater work we have to do, and turn our heat and zeal that way, and then we shall have cause to thank God for giving us these passions to assist us.

Our reason has little to do in forming our minds, and bringing us to a virtuous religious life; but it is our passions and

affections must do this ; for till they begin to move, our reason is like a chariot without wheels, that can never perform the journey. Our reason has not much to learn, and is easily taught ; only our passions are obstinate, our affections perverse, and our wills crooked, so that we find it harder to be persuaded than informed. But when once we have got our passions at command, all obstacles are removed, the difficulty of our work is over, and then there is no virtue that we may not with ease attain.

As our virtue, so our devotion is much indebted to our passions ; for a true religious zeal towards God, is only the kind workings of a pious and warm affection. There are in religion such substantial motives to piety, as are enough to make every man devout. As a passionate man's zeal is the soonest kindled, so the same warmth of constitution that inclines him to be intemperate, may, if well managed, excite him to be devout ; and therefore we have no reason to be ashamed or afraid of those passions which God has implanted in our nature ; since we find by pleasing experience, that they may become the most excellent means of grace. They may, if we rightly manage them, prove encouragements to our virtue, and help to our devotion ; they may tend to promote our meekness, gentleness, goodness, and all the fruits of the spirit. What has been said of our passions in general, I will now illustrate by a few particulars. And, first,

With respect to anger. This passion bears an ill name, and is frequently a troublesome companion, by engaging us in quarrels and disputes, so that one would think we might be better without it. And yet even this passion may be made of excellent use to us, not only by securing our persons from such indignities as may be unreasonably offered us ; but as a guard and centinel to our virtue. It may caution us not to be surprised by vice, nor tempted to approve of those things which are pernicious to us. Nay sometimes our anger turns upon ourselves, and grows warm against our bosom sin ; so that by the help of this passion, we may cast an evil spirit, when our reason alone could not effect it. What has been said of anger, may in

part be applied to hatred, disdain, and pride ; passions which occasion much evil, and yet by prudent management may be turned to a religious use, and do as much service. But envy, malice, and detraction can be of no good use ; they being pure vice, without any mixture of virtue.

Another troublesome companion to man is fear ; a treacherous passion appointed to give us fair warning of dangers, and yet it often needlessly disturbs us by false alarms, and representing dangers nearer and greater than they really are. It awakens our jealousy, increases our apprehensions, and anticipates our pain, so that one might almost think it might be well spared. And yet would we but set this passion right, and apply it to its proper object, there is not a more noble, a more useful principle in our nature. A heathen poet said it was the foundation of all religion. The divine Psalmist says, it is *the beginning of wisdom*. And those men whose constitution inclines them to be fearful, have a great advantage on this account : for if we are afraid of a little transient pain, a touch of the lancet, or prick of the sword, how much more tenderly ought we to be affected with the apprehensions of eternal death, and endless torments ? If we are afraid of disobliging a man, because he may hurt us ; how much more shall we stand in awe of God, who is ever present with us, and by the word of his mouth can speak us dead ? If we are so apt to be terrified with every little accident, from the wind, the earthquake, and the fire ; how can we but be astonished at the thoughts of that day, when the earth itself shall fall from under us, and the heavens shall melt with fervent heat ? If we are subject to be fearful, let us be afraid of these things, and then our fear will prove our best preservative. If we set the passions in the right way, they may be made at all times useful and serviceable to us.

Lastly, I shall mention but one passion more, and that is pity : a passion that seems to be implanted in us for the sake of that most excellent Christian duty, charity : a passion that makes us partake of the griefs, fears, and pains of other men, and is therefore properly called

compassion. It was the passion of pity which occasioned the apostles' declaration in the text; it being the cure of a poor impotent man, that made them pass for gods; and which forced them to declare they were subject to passions like other men. It must be allowed, that this was the most natural error that idolaters could be subject to; for there is nothing so apt to gain us true veneration and esteem, as the relieving the wants of others, and making their misfortunes our own. In nothing shall we appear so much like God, as by having a provident care, a tender concern for the good of his creatures. This is so kind, so human, so generous a passion, and so religious a duty, that it is difficult to say, whether it be most nearly allied to nature or to grace. It is in truth the top and perfection of both. It is that love which leads to all the graces of the gospel, and brings us to joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, and whatever is valuable and praise-worthy.

Love is the tenderest affection of the human soul, the first-fruits of the spirit; therefore let us shew our love in the most natural, the most religious way; and that is by our pity. There are many poor, many indigent persons among us, that stand in need of our relief; and though we cannot assist them in that miraculous manner the apostles did, yet silver and gold we have, and should also love pity and compassion, and let us give of what we have. Those who debase and magnify themselves for their good temper, and drink to pass for gods, by being void of passion, will act according to their opinion; but God grant that we may shew ourselves to be men, by employing our passions agreeably to reason, as the apostles did, and then they will tend to the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind. I will now propose some means, fit and proper to be used by us, to have our passions under rule and government.

There is a great difference between those who have been long subject to the power of unruly lusts and passions, and such as have rather evil inclinations than sinful habits to overcome; because it is more difficult to reform the former than the latter; the thought of which should

prevail on all young persons, to curb and restrain their affections betimes. And that our passions and lusts may not get the dominion over it, we must be careful to oppose and check them at first, before they become inordinate. We must be so vigilant as timely to rebuke and stifle all malicious, revengeful, proud, unclean, covetous, or repining thoughts, at their first starting up in our minds; for we must not play with and encourage any corrupt and impure imaginations, or wicked thoughts. When we cherish in our hearts covetous, lustful, or envious inclinations, we put our passions into a ferment, and so by degrees they rise to that height as to get the mastery of us, and then we are hurried into all kinds of sin and misery. So dangerous are such beginnings as these, that the devil, when he discovers them in us, takes advantage thereof, and brings us at last to commit the greatest wickedness, and the vilest crimes, without fear or shame.

We must therefore carefully resist the first motions and inclinations to sin, lest they break out into inordinate unruly passions; for it will be much easier to do this at first than when they have gained power over us. This advice is very proper for those whose passions are grown headstrong, and have long held them in captivity. Let such strive to avoid the temptations to his lusts, whatever it be, and oppose and weaken the first attacks, thereby to prevent the ill effects that might otherwise ensue. A little advantage is not inconsiderable and to be despised. A person who hath been long contracting an evil habit must be content to mend by degrees; and by gradually gaining ground, he will at last obtain a complete conquest over himself. Men of furious and choleric tempers, by constant resolution, by suddenly rebuking themselves after they have been surprised, and continuing in this good way, have at length attained a spirit of meekness and patience. And if once we gain a rectitude of temper, the government of our passions will not be difficult. In order to this we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. A meek-spirited man is not apt to break out into fury, nor a patient spirit to fall into despair, nor a philosopher of an even temper to

be extravagantly raised or depressed at prosperity or adversity. The chief difficulty lies in reforming the disposition of our souls, and renewing the inner man. It is not so hard for a bad man to abstain from one single act of sin, or to do a thing that is good, as to be converted from an evil temper, which leads him to vice, and renders him averse to virtue. Thus it is easier for a miser to give an alms upon occasion, than to be cured of that covetousness which is ever a root of injustice and uncharitableness. It is easier for a choleric person to curb and suppress his passion and wrath now and then, than totally to subdue that hastiness of spirit, which upon any provocation prompts him to anger. It is easier for a licentious voluptuary to deny himself sometimes a vicious pleasure, than quite to throw off the power of temptation. But however difficult this may be, it must be done. We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of spirit, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We must not forget to make our prayers to God, that he who giveth wisdom liberally and upbraideth not, would teach us the wisdom of governing our passions, and by the aid of his Holy Spirit, give us the victory over them; that he would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us, and sanctify us throughout. When an unruly passion is subdued, and a bad temper corrected, we have as it were obtained a new nature, and this is to be born anew, or of God. For these great blessings we must depend upon God by daily and fervent prayer. And all our vigilance and pains with ourselves, and our earnest intreaties at the throne of grace, we must particularly apply against that sin which does so easily beset us, against that passion we have the least under command; for that which exposeth us to the first mischief, requires the greatest care and strength to subdue it. We must labour to set nature right where most crooked: this will give us rule over all our passions, because the government of the rest will more easily follow. And if we once keep our ground, we shall maintain the inward quiet and security of our minds, and be-

ing freed from the bondage of sin, we shall enjoy the happy liberty of the children of God.

SERMON CVII.

By BISHOP GIBSON.

Of Temperance in Eating and Drinking.

1 COR. ix. 25.

Every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

THE apostle here alludes to those games and races that were celebrated among the Corinthians, in which the victors were rewarded with crowns and garlands; and such were their desires after these victories and rewards, that they who strove for the prize, regulated their diet and exercise, in order to improve their strength and activity; cheerfully submitting to the strictest abstinence, and denying themselves their most beloved pleasures. They were temperate in all things, or, as the original better expresses it, they were resolutely temperate and regular, so that nothing could break their constancy and resolution; and if they could do all this to obtain a corruptible crown, much more should we Christians willingly and cheerfully submit to such regulations and self-denials as the gospel requires; and not be tempted to any excess, when we have in our eye an incorruptible and immortal crown of glory. Though these words may be so taken, as to signify an universal government over our inordinate appetites and desires; yet in this place, the apostle more immediately alludes to the discipline observed at the games and races, with respect to a strict regulation in meats and drinks. But by shewing what are the proper rules and measure of a regular use of these, the great sinfulness of any irregular abuse of them will more evidently appear both in itself, in its consequence, and effects. However, it should be observed, that the constitutions, ages, and other circumstances of men being so very different,

there can be no one fixed rule or measure in this point; because the same proportion, which to one person may not be a sufficient nourishment, may to another be excess; so that what is necessary or convenient, within the bounds of moderation, must in great measure be left to the judgment of every Christian, upon an honest and conscientious regard to the true ends of eating and drinking; namely, the preserving of life, the refreshing the spirits, the preparing ourselves for the business of that station wherein God's providence hath placed us.

As God hath planted in every man a natural desire of life, so the first and most immediate end of eating and drinking is for the preservation of it. But then we are always to remember, that it is life we are to provide for, and not luxury; that the using God's creatures more liberally than nature requires or can bear, is not the way to preserve, but to shorten and destroy life; and that it is very sinful, ungrateful, and unreasonable, for us to suffer an inordinate appetite to turn those blessings to the destruction of life, which God graciously gives us for the preservation of it. Not that we are to live by weight and measure, or were presently guilty of sin, if we exceed what will barely support life, for this is impossible; and, besides, the fear of transgressing would fill the mind with perpetual scruples, and deprive us of the enjoyment of God's gifts: but the guard and caution which God requires of us, is, to keep from what will weaken and destroy life; and there is so great a difference between what will barely support, or overcharge nature, that we may, by observing a due proportion, very innocently enjoy the blessings of heaven.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to repair and refresh the spirits, when wasted by thought and business. It has pleased God to clothe our souls with bodies of a weak, heavy, and unactive constitution, which cannot endure long application of any kind, without growing faint, weary, and uneasy; and therefore he has provided meats and drinks in the nature of remedies, to revive and refresh the drooping spirits, and give new life and vigour to the whole. But then we must use them so as God intended; not to neglect or lay aside our natural

strength and vigour, but only to assist nature when faint and drooping. We must not apply these remedies but when nature requires them, either when we are hungry and thirsty, or tired with thought and labour; nor must we apply them in larger proportions, than what will fairly answer the needs and necessities of nature. But if men, out of luxury, or a desire to please the appetite, to pamper the body, or to comply with custom, and a habit of indulgence, will be continually refreshing nature, when she has no need, or overcharge her when she has; this is a direct abuse of God's blessings, clogs the spirits, instead of refreshing them, and by using nature to such needless aids, makes her lose her own strength, by craving a perpetual supply of artificial spirits; till by degrees men have no power to resist the importunity of such appetites, nor any life, any vigour left, but what they derive from those false flames which will quickly expire, and end in a fatal stupidity. This is the most wretched state into which man can sink; and changes the human into a brutal nature. For what is there that more distinguishes men from brutes than the government of the appetite? and when that is lost, they are only beasts in the shape of men; and yet so bewitching are the pleasures of the palate, and so easily are men's appetites corrupted, that with a little indulgence, they will insensibly sink into this miserable condition; and which nothing can prevent, but a serious regard to the real necessities of nature, uninfected by habit, together with steadfast resolutions to apply these refreshments only when they are proper and needful; and in such proportions as may make them a real refreshment, and not a burden by excess.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to fit and prepare us for the business of that station in which God's providence hath placed us. For every man, high or low, rich or poor, hath some certain work or business to do in the world; and by the wisdom and goodness of God, he affords us those blessings, to enable us to perform these with comfort and success; and therefore we ought to use and apply them in such a manner as may make them most subservient to our daily business, calling, and profession. And this we do, when we

make the seasons of eating and drinking what they ought to be, only short retreats from business, and not the business of life; when we take care in due time to return to the duties of our calling, and bring with us understanding and abilities, sufficient to pursue it: and when we unbend our minds, which is sometimes necessary, to let it be seldom, and without any mixture of excess. An enjoyment of the blessings of life within these rules, is truly a repairing of our strength and spirits, and a real furtherance in our daily business; and being so, is a sober and temperate use of our meats and drinks, and answers the end for which God gave them. But when these refreshments are long and frequent, and consume much time that might be otherwise usefully and beneficially employed; when men have no other aim in invigorating the spirits, by the liberal enjoyments of God's blessings, but to spend them in mirth and jollity; when so far from designing them as preparatives to business, they cannot bear to think of returning to business, or when their excesses have left them neither sense nor reason to attend it; then is such a conduct an irregular and sinful abuse of God's creatures.

And this intolerable waste of time is greatly aggravated by the expence of treasure thereby occasioned, which in the richer sort is a defrauding of their indigent neighbours, who are to partake of their superfluous wealth; and in the poorer sort, is the robbing of their own needy families, which ought to be their daily and immediate care. And both rich and poor will find these no small aggravations of the guilt of gluttony and drunkenness, when they come to render an account at the last day. Nor will it be any excuse to say, they were unavoidably led to these excesses, by their concerns in the world; since were it not also their inclination, the business and the excess may be easily separated, where there is a sober virtuous mind. But instead of making this a pretence for their intemperance, they should be very watchful against such temptations, and earnestly pray for God's grace, to be delivered therefrom. And if we duly attend to what has been observed, we shall be able to judge, not only what are the proper

bounds of sobriety and temperance, and when we exceed them; but also how great and heinous the guilt of that excess is, and how basely we abuse the blessings of God; in our forgetting their proper ends, by perverting them to purposes directly contrary thereto, in turning that to the destruction of life which God gave for the preservation of it; in our making that the means of stupefying the spirits, by which he designed to raise and refresh them; in transforming ourselves into the state of brutes by those helps, which he bestowed for the more vigorous discharge of the duties of rational creatures; and in making that the occasion of indisposing us for the business of life, which God graciously gives to support us under it. Such is the sinfulness of an inordinate use of meats and drinks in itself, as it perverts the true ends of the blessings of God, and is a shameful abuse of human nature. I shall now proceed to consider the sad effects and bad consequences of this sin.

Every sin is in some respect contrary to us. Some sins are hurtful to our bodies, others to our souls. Some waste our fortunes, others ruin our reputation. Some are very bad in their own nature, and others are attended with fatal consequences. But the sin of drunkenness is equally hurtful to soul and body; it is as bad in itself, as in its consequences; and has an ill influence on human society in general, and on those who are guilty of it in particular. Was I to describe all the ill characters of this vice, the description would be so frightful and surprising, that one would really wonder how it is possible that human nature should sink into so base and infamous, so hurtful and desperate a vice; for nothing so much wears the body, wastes the life and strength of man, as drunkenness. It fires the blood, weakens the stomach, and often puts a speedy end to life, by fevers, sad diseases, or other fatal accidents, to which a man is then exposed: and where a constitution is so strong as to escape this, yet the certain slow waste that these disorders bring, seldom suffer such men to live out half their days. Gouts and other infirmities are severe reckonings, that they must pay for those unruly liberties they have allowed themselves. And hence arise

many quarrels among men, whose passions being inflamed, while their reason is extinguished, do often end fatally. This vice is the great corrupter of young persons who are drawn in and ensnared by the mirth and gaiety that accompany it, and from hence proceed many irregularities. The wise man elegantly describes this: *Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine. But at the last it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.* Both sweating and lewdness are the ordinary effects of it. *Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of the mast:—a drunken man being exposed to so many dangers which he can neither foresee nor prevent.*

There is nothing that more wastes a man's time and fortune than drunkenness. It makes him forget God, himself, and his neighbour. The time he should employ for improving his mind, looking after his affairs, or doing good to others, is thrown away in those brutal excesses; so that, as the wise man says, *The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness (or laziness) shall clothe a man with rags.* That hard drinking insensibly brings on sloth and great carelessness, by which men first neglect, and then ruin their affairs, is too notorious to require any proof. It also makes men remiss in the concerns of their families, and wanting in all the respects due to their relations, friends, or neighbours. But the worst part of this vice appears in this, that our reason, and all the powers of our souls, fall under such disorders and unruly violences, that a man, while he is under the power of wine or strong liquor, is transformed into a beast or madman. Our reason is the image of God, the glory of our nature, and the guide of our life: and God has plentifully supplied us with meat and drink, that by these our bodies may be rendered capable to serve our minds. But when men abuse these by excess, they not only waste and misapply the good creatures of God, but do also contradict the

ends of nature, deprive themselves of the free use of their reason, and which usually produces in some a spirit of rage, passion, and cruelty; in others, sullenness, obstinacy, and ill-nature; and in most, great folly and indecency in words and actions. Hence often proceed riots and excesses, swearing and railing, fighting and murder. And all these are so many aggravations of the sin of immoderate drinking; and are such as men know by their own repeated experience to be the usual effects of it. And thus, whereas the chief study of every wise and good man ought to be, to perfect his reason, and raise his nature to the highest pitch; a drunkard labours to debase and depress it all he possibly can.

Some men of stronger heads will perhaps think themselves unconcerned in all this, because being used to hard drinking, it has no visible effect on them. But let such seriously consider these words: *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflames them!—And woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink!* Such men are generally the plagues of the places where they live, being the instruments of corrupting all about them, tempting them to waste their strength, to ruin their families and constitutions. Thus it appears that drunkenness carries with it a complication of evils, equally destructive to soul and body. But there is another species of intemperance, that seems not so criminal, because not attended with so many fatal symptoms; I mean those who are not quite intoxicated, and therefore think themselves free of the heavy charge that falls upon it; and yet habituate themselves to drinking of wine or strong liquor when their bodies no way require it. Some think it a decent and hospitable way of entertaining friends to be frequently putting the glass about, without which they imagine conversation grows heavy, and that the master of the house is too frugal of his liquor. But besides the waste of time and of God's good creatures by means of such tippling, an excessive heat is raised in the blood, which insensibly impairs na-

ture, and brings on such a habit, that they cannot refrain from drinking, and this in time corrupts their health, and enfeebles their minds.

To all these arguments against this vice, arising from the nature of our souls and bodies, there is another very strong one which the Christian religion affords. When St. Paul reckons up the works of darkness, in which the Romans had lived while heathens, which Christians were obliged to avoid, he begins with this; *Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in strife and envy.* And the same apostle, comparing the gospel to light, and heathenism to darkness, observes, *That they that be drunken are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day be sober.* And our Saviour bids us,—*take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and so that day come upon us unawares.* St. Paul also reckons drunkenness among the works of the flesh, and says, *that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Besides what appears from these passages of scripture, there is a more general consideration, which shows how contrary this sin is to the spirit and design of the gospel; which directs us *to mortify our bodies with its lusts and affections; to subdue our appetites, to crucify the old man, and to bring our bodies into subjection to our minds.* The main design of the New Testament is, to make us consider ourselves as pilgrims on earth, daily to remember that we must soon leave this world, and therefore ought to prepare for another. We are called upon to live after, and to walk according to the spirit; not to indulge our irregular appetites and desires; but as far as our state of health and life will permit, to deny all unnecessary gratifications. These are the rules, and this is the spirit of the gospel; so that, if we duly consider things, we have arguments sufficient to deter us from this sin.

But what then must we think or say of our age, in which this corruption so universally prevails over all ranks and degrees of persons, so that scarce any are to be found who have escaped it? Some of a more brutal kind, are overcome with

the mere love of the liquor, though it be so shameful an excess, that no one will own it. Others know not how to dispose of their time, being bred to nothing, and hardly capable of any thing. And because of mere idleness, to get time off their hands, they run into these extravagancies, in which days and nights are spent. And yet no man can have been so neglected in his education, but that he may find somewhat to do if he will. He may and ought to look into his own affairs, and apply himself to some sort of industry. He may find out some good company to converse with, and some occasions to do acts of kindness and charity to others; so that a man may, if he will, employ his time to many good purposes.

A pleasant conversation is no doubt very agreeable, and to have it moderately enlivened and refreshed, with some generous liquor, can be no crime; but cannot men have mirth and be merry without being drunk or mad? Is there no measure to such folly? It may therefore well be said, that the end of such mirth is madness. For to play with our health and life, our fortune and reputation, above all with our souls and eternities, is a madness beyond expression; and yet these are the men who often pretend to wit and sense. Some indeed are carried against their own inclination, merely by ill example and custom; till at last habit and practice make it familiar to them. But it is a strange degree of perverseness, that men will become a sort of martyrs for their vices. They would think it extremely hard, were they obliged to endure so much in the practice of religion and virtue as they suffer by the sin of intemperance. But dissolute habits do not change the nature of things; for though they may grow less shameful and reproachful, by being common, yet they are not the less evil. And that man must have a very weak mind, who is ashamed of being wise and sober, because others are irregular and extravagant. Some there are, who think they cannot be hospitable and free-hearted without sending their friends and servants home intoxicated. But this is a very unsuitable return of a civil visit; to endeavour to destroy the health of him

who in kindness comes to see him, and perhaps to endanger his life in going home. The imputation of covetousness, which some are afraid of, may easily be removed by acts of charity to the poor, or generosity to the afflicted and unfortunate. These are noble instances of true goodness and largeness of soul, by which others are both benefited and relieved. Thus it appears, how weak all those excuses are, which these mad sort of people make use of to palliate such an enormous practice.

And among the miseries of this unhappy state, it is none of the least, that where an inordinate appetite reigns, reason and consideration are shut out; and when men are reduced to such a thoughtless condition, they generally go on without any sense, either of their sin or danger; and without any view beyond their present enjoyment. And nothing can awaken them out of this stupid state, but a great resolution, and serious reflection on the brutal condition in which these indulgences have brought them: on the shameful abuses of God's blessings, and their own rational faculties, in which it has betrayed them; and to what dreadful miseries it will bring them at last. These reflections imprinted on their hearts, may by God's blessing produce a happy change, and deliver them from their misery and danger. For though custom is very powerful, especially in the present case, yet it has not force enough to make that necessary to nature which is destructive of it, as all excess must be. But so far from this indulgence being necessary to life, that when a long course of intemperance has endangered it, the leaving that course is always the first prescription, without which all other remedies are useless and ineffectual. So that what they call necessary to preserve life, tends only to satisfy a craving and inordinate appetite; the gratifying of which is the direct and immediate means of destroying life. And it is therefore no wonder, that an indulgence which has been long continued should be uneasy under the first check or restraint. But if there be a steady resolution to restrain the current of desire, the appetite will, by degrees, grow more patient and quiet, and such persons will find more pleasure

in governing than they ever did by indulging it.

Let then those who have indulged themselves in a habit of intemperance, stand still and consider, that they are in the worst state of slavery; a slavery of reason to appetite, of the human to the brutal part. Let them resolve to assert the freedom and dignity of their nature, and if they have lived like beasts, to die like men. Let them reflect how they have abused the blessings of God to luxury and excess: with how much goodness he has borne their provocations, and waited for their amendment. And let a sense of his mercy and their own vileness produce in them that godly shame and sorrow, which worketh repentance to salvation. But if neither the force of reason nor religion will prevail, let the terrors of the Lord persuade them not to continue in a course that must shortly end in their eternal destruction. If the work be difficult, it is also necessary; and let men consider, whether they shall be uneasy now, or miserable for ever. The difficulty of the work should excite their resolution; and by constant prayers to God, he will strengthen and assist them.

It must be owned that the condition of such a person, though not desperate, is exceeding dangerous; and the more so, as there are but few instances of any who are reclaimed from it. And a state so dangerous should be powerful warnings to others not to be betrayed into the same kind of slavery, by luxury and indulgence. The only way to avoid the danger is, at first to govern and restrain the appetite, to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. Such restraints and self-denials are a necessary means to preserve and secure men's innocence, and keep them from falling into excess. So that the only way to be safe and innocent, is to keep an habitual guard and restraint upon the appetite, from a due sense of the true ends and uses of eating and drinking; of the great wickedness of abusing God's blessings, to the dishonour of religion, to the shame and reproach of human nature; and of the unspeakable danger and misery of living and dying in habits of excess, both as to this world and the next. And with these considerations, there must be frequent and earnest prayer

to God, that he will preserve upon their minds a lively sense of these things, and mercifully afford such supplies of grace and strength as will be needful to prevent those evil habits, and effectually to restrain all such acts of irregularity and excess as naturally lead to them.

SERMON CVIII.

By ARCHBISHOP SHARPE.

Character of an upright Man.

PSALM CXII. 4.

To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

THIS psalm seems to be an explication or paraphrase on the words of St. Paul: *godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.* And here we have a description of the pious man, and of his blessedness in this life. His piety is described in the following terms: he is one who fears God, and delights in his commandment; he is righteous and upright in his conversation; he is prudent, and guides his affairs with discretion! he has a great sense of God, on whom his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? he is charitable, gracious, and full of compassion; he sheweth favour and lendeth; he hath dispersed and given to the poor. His blessedness is thus represented: His posterity shall be great and happy: his seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. His fortune shall be ample and plentiful: riches and plenteousness shall be in his house. His fame and reputation shall be lasting, his righteousness remaineth for ever; he shall be had in everlasting remembrance. His honour, power, and dignity shall excite the envy of the wicked; his horn shall be exalted with honour, the wicked shall see it and be grieved. Lastly, he shall be safe and secure in troublesome times: *To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.* Such light shall arise to an upright man in evil times, as that he

shall not be moved, neither shall he be afraid of evil tidings; for his heart is established, and he shall not shrink, until he sees his desire upon his enemies, or is delivered out of his distress.

Of these several characters ascribed to a pious man, I shall recommend to your present consideration his uprightness; and of the several instances of his blessedness shall only observe those of safety and security, in times perilous and troublesome: *To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.* The character of the person to whom the promise of blessedness is made, is the upright man, or a man of honesty and integrity. By uprightness is meant the conformity of a man's mind to the eternal rules of righteousness, and the agreement of his actions to the principles of his mind: so that, in general, an upright man is one who in all things follows the dictates of his conscience, and makes his duty the rule of his actions. But the more lively to display his amiable qualities to our imitation, it will be proper to consider him more particularly with respect to God and men; both as to his religion, and his civil conversation.

A religious carriage towards God is essentially necessary to uprightness. *He that walketh in uprightness feareth the Lord.* Take away religion and the fear of God, the foundation of uprightness is destroyed. He that hath no sense of God and religion can never think himself bound to observe any rules in his actions and behaviour, but what are subservient to his private, sensual, and worldly interest; and consequently whatever is inconsistent therewith, he it never so base, vile, and injurious, he may act and execute without restraint, whenever a temptation offers; and yet think himself as innocent, and his actions as commendable, as if he had been truly honest and virtuous.

He therefore that is an upright man, hath a serious and hearty sense of God and religion on his mind, and is ever careful to preserve and increase it. But then he is not contented with a mere speculative belief, an outward profession of religious truths; but he has them so impressed on his heart, as to influence his whole life and conversation. He thinks

it not sufficient to be orthodox in his opinions, or a member of a true church; zealous in maintaining and promoting the right way; but he strives to live as he believes, to practise suitably to the profession he makes. As he holds fast the form of godliness, so he is careful to express the power of it, in an innocent, virtuous life. He takes not up his principles to advance his interest, or please a party; but he believes what appears true, and professes it because it is his duty. He neither chuses his religion out of worldly considerations, nor leaves it on such motives; but is resolute and constant in bearing testimony to the truth against all opposition. He is one who thinks religion too sacred to be prostituted to mean purposes; and therefore never uses it as an instrument to serve any base end, though he was sure thereby to compass his designs. He is a man who does not place his religion in outward forms and services, but hath a nobler sense of God than to think such things are pleasing to him; and therefore his principal concern is about the great indispensable duties of Christianity; *the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith*. He hath the everlasting notions and differences of good and evil deeply engraven in his heart; and how to practise the one and avoid the other, is his chief study. He endeavours uprightly and sincerely to observe all God's commands; calls no sin little, because his temper inclines him to it; but at all times preserves an uniform aversion to whatever is evil. He is an utter enemy to all factions in religion, and though he loves truth, is not less concerned for peace. He is better pleased with his charity to compose and reconcile religious differences, than with all his skill and abilities to dispute them; for he knows that love is more acceptable to God than a right opinion. Lastly, he is religious without noise, and uses no little arts to make his piety known. He seeks not the praise of men, but studies only to approve himself to God; and is therefore as careful of his thoughts as of his actions. He fears God, and regards his duty as much when no one sees him, as if the eyes of all were upon him. These are the great instances of uprightness as

to religion; and whoever makes good these characters, may reasonably conclude himself an honest man towards God, a true Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

If we take a view of the upright man in his civil conversation, as to his carriage and demeanour towards men, it will be proper to consider him as a private person, and a magistrate. As a private person, he will so frame and model his whole conversation, take such a prudent and diligent care of himself and his own good, as is consistent with, and tends to promote the good and happiness of others. He considers that every man has a right to be happy as well as himself; and since none can be so without the assistance of others, he thinks it reasonable that he should contribute his endeavours towards it. These being the main principles of his mind, he is careful that his actions and whole conversation are suitable thereto. He is therefore exactly just in all his dealings, not knowingly doing wrong or injury to any one, though he could gain ever so much without being discovered. He is faithful to his trust, never taking advantage of another's credulity, nor abusing the confidence reposed in him. He is a man of great candour, of sweet and obliging behaviour; careful not to suffer by good nature, and yet ready to be kind and assist others, unless attended with great inconvenience to himself; but what he once promises he punctually performs, though it be prejudicial to him. He is a man that loves, and is as tender of a good name and reputation as any one; but scorns to use any evil arts to procure or preserve it. He hates mean and servile compliances, and will not speak or act against the sense of his own mind, to humour any man. Flattery and dissimulation he abhors; envy and detraction he is above. He never lessens another to make himself greater, nor repines at his neighbour's prosperity. He puts a fair construction on men's words and actions, rather concealing a fault than report it worse than it is. He hopes and thinks the best of all men, and does the most good he can. He is plain, free, and open in his carriage; his words and thoughts always go together. Though he is watchful of opportunities

to do himself good, and is careful to avoid dangers, yet he never uses indirect means to benefit or secure himself. He scorns to take advantage of any man's necessities, nor will undermine another to effect his own designs. Deceit and collusion are strangers to his dealing. He esteems a cunning intriguing man no better than a knave. In a word, all his designs are honest and just, such as tend to the good of the community as well as his own, but to no man's loss and detriment; and the means he makes use of to obtain his designs are so fair, that he cares not who knows them. This is the man that is upright in his conversation towards men; the man that to the wisdom of the serpent joins the innocence and simplicity of the dove.

Thus much of the upright man, as a private person; let us now view him under a more conspicuous character, and as a magistrate, intrusted with the management of public affairs: and here we shall find him actuated by the same principles, and pursuing the same designs we have before mentioned; only his virtues, having another sphere and object, require a different consideration. The great thing he proposes by accepting any office, is the glory of God and the public good: the honour and dignity of the place, and other worldly advantages, are but secondary considerations with him. He studies not to ingratiate himself with men, but to discharge a good conscience. He has courage and resolution to do what is fit, just, and conducive to the public good; not discouraged from his duty by the menaces of the mighty, nor the murmurings of the multitude. He resolves not hastily, but maturely deliberates and considers before he determines. He does nothing precipitately, but impartially weighs what is represented to him. His ears are open to all parties; he debates without passion, prejudice, or prepossession. Neither profit nor friends can corrupt him to act in matters of right contrary to his inward sense. His care and study is chiefly employed on the public. He is ever sedulous to maintain the worship and service of God, to defend and encourage true religion; to suppress vice and debauchery, impiety and irreligion. *He is a father to the poor,*

and the cause which he knoweth not, he searcheth out; he breaketh the jaws of the wicked, and plucketh the spoils out of his teeth. He studiously endeavours to preserve his allegiance to his prince, and his fidelity to the public; neither invading the rights of the one, nor injuring the liberties of the other. By his prudence and moderation he will endeavour to extinguish growing flames, and not add fuel to them; but will calm and allay men's jealousies, rather than excite and encrease them. To conclude; he is a man that fears God and honours the king, obeys the laws, and meddles not with them that are given to change.—I shall now proceed to represent the advantages and privileges, that an upright man enjoys in evil and dangerous times. *To the upright therefore there ariseth light in darkness.* By darkness is here meant any kind of straits, difficulties, or adversities. By light we are to understand either guidance and direction, safety and defence, or peace and joy, which ariseth to the upright man. And

To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, taking light for guidance and direction. Be the times never so dark, he hath this happiness, that he is rarely at a loss how to conduct himself. He, of all others, most easily sees his way, it being plain, easy, and straight before him: but the ways of vice and wickedness are extremely rough and crooked. Whoever pursues evil designs, and is a slave to base affections, must necessarily be entangled in perpetual labyrinths; for having many different and inconsistent ends to pursue, he must unavoidably be often at a loss how to behave himself. If he goes this way, then something will be discovered which he studiously endeavoured to conceal; if that way, then some man or party is obliged; whose interest he stood in need of; if he takes a third way, perhaps he then destroys his main design. Such difficulties and perplexities always attend the man of intrigue, and every one who walks not uprightly. But the contrary of this is the lot of the upright man. For he has only one end to pursue; and that is, to discharge a good conscience. By this all his concerns are regulated; and of consequence he hath no clashing of interests to perplex his deliberations; no little turns

to be served ; all his resolutions are easily made, and he avoids most of those difficulties which entangle others. His counsels and methods are always the same, and he is never at a loss to behave himself on any emergency. His way is commonly so plain, that he requires little advice or instruction to find it: *The integrity of the upright shall guide him, the path of the just is a shining light.* Again,

If he happens to fall into such circumstances, as to stand in need of great advice and deliberation, yet the upright man hath vastly the advantage of others : because he always enjoys the free use of his intellectual powers, can exert his reason to its highest perfection and greatest advantage : whereas the man who has sinister ends to pursue, by indirect methods, is sadly clouded in his discerning faculties, so as to hinder him from distinguishing rightly, whereby he commits many blunders and mistakes. For whoever frames his mind by other measures than those of honesty and conscience ; whoever intemperately pursues his private ends, or is a slave to inordinate passions of any sort ; these things will so bias his soul, as to render him incapable of making a true judgment of what is right ; and expose him to many dangerous errors in the management of his affairs, even in matters of little difficulty. But the upright man is not obnoxious to any of these inconveniences ; for having no turns to serve, but what are good and honest, nor no private affections or passions to be gratified, his conceptions of things are according to their nature, his determinations and resolutions are reasonable and proper, such as become the occasion. As his main design is to do in all instances what is best, so that preserves him from mistaking what is so. His reason and understanding are free and at liberty, and when any difficulty arises, he of all men is most likely to get out of it with ease.

And yet if we take light for safety and security, for defence and protection, an upright man in the worst of times may, above all others, promise these things to himself ; he that walketh uprightly walketh surely. And indeed this seems to be what is principally intended by the Psalmist. The light here said to arise to

the upright in darkness, chiefly respects his security from danger in times of great calamity, as appears from what follows : *He shall not be moved for ever : he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart shall not shrink, till he sees his desire upon his enemies.* And this security in times of danger the upright man may expect, because uprightness does in its own nature conduce thereto, and is what also intitles him to God's more particular protection. *As by wickedness a city is overthrown, so by the blessing of the upright, it is exalted.* Every upright man is really a benefactor to the public. And if any one can in reason hope to escape the violence and iniquity of bad times, the man of honesty and integrity, he who is upright in all his ways, is the most likely to succeed therein ; because he of all others takes the surest method to preserve himself ; he is least obnoxious to the malice, envy, or rapine of open enemies, or pretended friends. So that uprightness and integrity is a shield and protection.

The upright man conducts himself in life with so much prudence, as to avoid those rocks, on which others split and are ruined. The destruction of men, even in the worst of times, is generally to be imputed to themselves ; either to the careless neglect of their own affairs, the lavishness and intemperance of their tongues, or to a busy intermeddling with the concerns of others. Such things as these commonly bring misfortunes on men, and are the foundation of all those straits and difficulties with which they are entangled, even in times of the greatest calamity. But the upright man in a great measure is free therefrom, because his principles oblige him to act directly opposite. His ways are so universally approved, that none will offer him an injury, lest it tends to their own detriment. As he endeavours to oblige all men, and by his conduct to make every one his friend, and none his enemies ; so when any difficult circumstances attend him, he will easily find those who are ready to help and assist him. His conversation is so unexceptionable, his management of affairs so prudent, that those who do not love him, will not easily find an occasion to do him injury. Such as

, have no acquaintance with him, yet having a good esteem for honesty and uprightness in general, will be ready to afford him what assistance they can; from a natural sense, that a good man should be protected, because his ease and circumstances may one day be their own. Even those who have lost all sense of good and evil, yet in order to preserve their credit and interest with mankind, will think themselves obliged not to oppress an upright man.

But how ineffectual soever all human means may prove, to secure and preserve an upright man in evil times, yet he has still an anchor more firm and stable to rely on, and which will not fail him; and that is the protection of God, and the care of his particular providence. Men may plot and design, order and contrive as they please, but still God governs the world; and either blasts their most fair and hopeful projects, or if he suffers them to succeed, turns them to what use and purpose he thinks best. And if God rules and disposes all things, *as that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his will*, in a more especial manner doth he engage himself to take care of those who walk uprightly before him. He hath promised to make *their righteousness as clear as the light, and their just dealing as the noon day*; that they shall not be confounded in perilous times, and in the days of death they shall have enough. Though they fall they shall not be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand: that he will be their strength in the time of trouble; he will stand by and save them from the ungodly, because they put their trust in him. It would be endless to produce the many passages in scripture to this purpose; I shall therefore only add that remarkable one, where in the upright man, and his security in evil times, are described after a very particular manner: *He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; that despiseth the gain of oppressions; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood; and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of the rocks; his bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.* That is, who-

ever walks uprightly, and makes a conscience of his ways, such a man shall be always under the watchful care and protection of the divine providence. For God will not suffer him to fall into any great distress; but will afford him such a portion of temporal good things, as to render his life easy and supportable. Experience generally verifies the truth of this; honest and upright men, in the midst of public calamities, for the most part escaping better than those who are otherwise. Such, in their greatest extremities, when no prospect of deliverance from any human means have appeared, yet, after a most strange, extraordinary, and unexpected manner, have met with succour and relief. And thus attended by the special providence of God, they have never been miserable, however sometimes afflicted, and deprived of an ample fortune.

But it must be acknowledged, that though piety and uprightness have the promise of blessedness in this life, and which is generally made good; yet there are many instances to the contrary. God, for wise reasons, may suffer an upright man to be oppressed, and perish in a common destruction, without violating such his promises; which can only be meant to respect ordinary and common events. And even in this case there will *to the upright arise light in darkness*: that is, light in the third sense we have given of the word, as implying peace, joy, and comfort; according to the Psalmist, *light is soon for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* Whatever afflictions the upright man suffers, he hath this advantage over others, that he can more easily bear them than they, without any great disturbance to himself: because he enjoys the same calmness and serenity of mind, the same peace, quiet and contentment, that ever he did. He rather rejoices than repines and grows discontented under his present sufferings; well knowing they are so ordered by the great Governor of the world, for his good and benefit. This consideration effectually supports him under all difficulties he conflicts with; that he is not only easy and quiet, but well-pleased with the dispensations of the divine providence towards him, how ungrate-

ful soever to flesh and blood. Let what will happen, he is full of peace and joy, not being disappointed in his designs. His great aim was to please God: his conscience assures him, from God's word, that he has done it; and he waits for the happy time, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and then doubts not of receiving approbation, and praise, and great reward; and his life and death will verify the Psalmist's observation, *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

SERMON CIX.

By ARCHBISHOP SHARPE.

A Serious Persuasive to a Holy Life.

PHIL. iv. 8.

Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

HERE are many particulars recommended by the apostle, to our thoughts and practice, though not so many as the words which express them, there being several used in this enumeration of the same meaning and import: and which may be reduced to these following observations, and are so many instances of a Christian's duty: namely, a constant adherence to the true religion; honesty and justice in our dealings; a life of chastity and purity; and the constant practice of every thing virtuous and commendable. This being the true meaning of the words, I shall make them the heads of my present exhortation.

And first, *Whatever things are true, think on these things.* The truths St. Paul here exhorts us to remember, are no doubt the truths of the gospel, delivered by our Saviour; these we should think on, persist in, and never be prevailed on to depart from. It is an inestimable blessing of God to this kingdom, that he not only vouchsafes us the light of his gospel, but has also delivered it to us,

with greater purity and sincerity, and free from the mixture of errors, than to any other people. Were we all sensible of the state of religion in other countries, we should soon be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this church are, above all Christians in Christendom. Let us therefore firmly adhere to the truths we have been taught and do profess; and to that church from whom we learnt them. Though I think no church infallible, yet if the truths of religion are to be taken from the rules of holy scriptures, and the platform of the primitive churches, then the church of England, both as to doctrine and practice, is undoubtedly the purest this day in the world; the most orthodox in faith, the freest from idolatry, superstition, and enthusiasm, of any now extant. This I can say, and declare it with great seriousness and sincerity, that if the religion of Jesus Christ, delivered in the New Testament, is the true religion, as most certain it is, then I believe in my conscience, that the communion of the church of England is a safe way to salvation, nay, the safest of any I know in the world. And therefore let me exhort you, stedfastly to hold fast and persevere in this communion. As here we have the things that are true, let us think of, and heartily embrace them, live and die in the profession of them.

The next thing recommended to us, is universal honesty, justice, and righteousness in our conversation. *Whatsoever things are true, honest, and just; think on these things.* The words honest and just import the same thing, though sometimes honest signifies grave or venerable. And indeed, if we are not sincerely just and honest, it is in vain to expect any advantage from our professing the truth. Whoever can allow himself in the practice of any knavish, dishonest, indirect dealing, however orthodox his belief and opinion may be, yet he is no true Christian. Let then our interests be what they will, yet in all our dealings we must be strictly just and upright: use no tricks, practice no ill arts to serve our ends; but in all our transactions with men, we must deal with that simplicity, integrity, and good conscience, as becomes those who are the disciples of him who was the most innocent, sincere, and upright person in the

world. For no dishonesty can prosper long; whatever present turns it may serve, in a little time it will be bitterly repented; but righteousness and justice will establish a man's ways; the upright man, though not always the richest, is ever the safest.

The apostle having recommended to our practice whatever is true, honest, and just, he then adds, things that are pure; meaning thereby that we should study to be chaste and temperate in our hearts and lives, avoiding all manner of lewdness and sensuality. And if it was necessary to put Christians in mind of this, in an age of so much strictness and devotion, it is abundantly more so in ours, when luxury, debauchery, and all manner of immorality so greatly prevail among us. I pray God to make us all sensible of the great folly and wickedness, the danger and dreadful consequences of such practices. And if we would preserve a sense of religion on our minds; if we have any regard for our health, estates, and families; any intention not to entail sottishness and diseases on our families; if we love our souls, and hope to see God, *let us abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* Let us learn to live soberly and chastely, to practise purity and temperance, to avoid whoredom and drunkenness. For however we may slight these things, yet we are expressly told, that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. *That neither adulterers, fornicators, unclean persons, nor drunkards, shall ever inherit the kingdom of God, or of Christ.*

But the apostle having recommended truth, honesty, and purity, to the daily thoughts and practice of all Christians, he then sums up the whole in generals, advising them, not only to be careful in those things, but also to improve in every other virtue that is praise-worthy, and esteemed among men. For, says he, *whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, any praise in them, think on these things.* From hence we may learn what obligations we are under. For if the gospel of Christ favours us with such glorious light, such invaluable promises, and mighty assistances, we may in reason suppose, that in return great things are expected from us. To

believe and profess the gospel, to do no wrong to any one, to be free from lewdness and drunkenness; though these are great and good things, yet Christianity obliges us to much more; for we must also be kind and charitable, as well as just and honest; modest, meek, and humble, as well as temperate and chaste. And not only so, but we must even avoid all appearance of evil. We must not only abstain from acts of injustice but from doing a hard ill-natured thing to any one; not only keep ourselves within the known limits of temperance and chastity, but avoid all opposite vices leading thereto; and the same in all other instances. For we are to endeavour to be as free from blame in our whole conversation as we possibly can; and besides, to do as much good as our circumstances will permit; this is to be a Christian indeed, and *to adorn the doctrine of God in all things.* Extremely happy and great will be the reward of those who thus walk worthy of their heavenly calling. They will here enjoy the solid peace and assurance of God's favour, which far exceeds all earthly blessings; and hereafter partake of eternal glory. Having thus given an account of what things we are to make the main pursuit of our lives, it will be proper also to say something of the methods and means which are necessary to be used for that purpose.

And the first thing I would exhort you to, is to use your endeavours to possess your minds with a hearty sense of Almighty God, and the absolute necessity of being seriously religious. Though mankind are naturally disposed to believe a God and religion, yet many of us have no lively hearty sense of it; we use religion as we do our clothes; they are convenient and necessary, therefore we wear them, but as to the form and make, we follow the custom of the country wherein we live. Yet as our clothes alter not our features, or the shape of our bodies, so neither doth the religion we profess any way affect the temper of our souls. In each case we only consult outward conveniency, being still the same persons, both inwardly and outwardly; but this way of being religious can do us no great kindness. Our religion will never serve us to any extraordinary pur-

pose, unless our hearts are affected with it as well as our understandings. If therefore we love either our happiness in this world or the next, let us be persuaded to make it our principal care, to get a lively and vigorous sense of God impressed on our minds; and to approve ourselves to him, by walking as our blessed Saviour hath taught us; if we do this, we shall experience the great benefit of it, both here and hereafter. It is in vain to think of passing tolerably through this world, unless we have the hopes of God's favour to support us under the multitude of evil accidents, to which the state of human life necessarily exposes us. And as to the other world, without such hopes we are perfectly lost. Nor can we entertain any rational hopes of God's blessing and favour, unless we make it our chief business to serve, please, and obey him.

There are a great many excellent rules and maxims that we usually give our friends and children, whereby to make their fortunes. We are apt to advise them to get a true understanding of their business, and to pursue it with diligence; to keep out of ill-company; to avoid drinking, gaming, and lewdness; to study the tempers and humours of mankind, and dexterously apply themselves to those they want to converse with; and no doubt these are exceeding good rules, and very fit to be studied and practised. But still there is one rule, without which the others will signify little, to make the life of man easy and happy; and that is, to preserve a lively sense of God on our spirits, to have his fear always before our eyes, to love him above all things, to value his favour more than life, and dread his displeasure as the worst of evils. He that is possessed of this good principle, will naturally fall into the practice of them. And as to have the fear and love of God in our hearts is the most effectual way to obtain the divine blessing: so it is the only means to make our circumstances happy, if they are good; or easy and supportable, if bad. If therefore we would prosper and not be miserable, let us not be contented with a superficial outside religion, but affect our minds with a deep sense of God, and our duty towards him; and endeavour to impress the same sen-

timents on our children and friends. In truth, our present and future happiness so much depend on the true belief of a God, on our love to him, and the hopes of his favour; that without it, the present world, and all the imaginary pleasures and glories thereof, would to all wise and good men appear not only an empty, dull, unsatisfactory place, but a dismal melancholy prison. Was it supposed that all things here were the effects of blind chance or fatal necessity, and that no wisdom and goodness presides, to take care of mankind, no considerate man would desire to live in this world.

But after we have possessed our minds with a hearty sense of God, and of his providence, presence, and goodness, so as to make it the business of our lives to recommend ourselves to him; we should, in the next place, be careful to keep up that sense, by a constant and daily worship of him. For the sake of God and our own soul, we must not neglect our prayers. We cannot expect God to bless us if we do not make conscience of daily paying our tribute of honour and worship. We must therefore be constant in our private devotions; as we every day receive renewed pledges of God's love and goodness in various instances, so every day our affection and gratitude should be expressed to him by hearty prayer and thanksgiving. This is absolutely necessary, if we would preserve a hearty sense of religion on our minds. Those who have families should consider themselves as heads and governors of a society: the first notion of a society being that of a family. Every family is a little kingdom, and every kingdom ought to be a great family. And is it natural or decent that there should be any society on earth not to own and worship God? And yet I fear there are great numbers of families in this kingdom, wherein God is not so much as named, unless to affront him by cursing and swearing. With just reason we complain of the great looseness, profaneness, and irreligion of the age. I doubt much of this is owing to the masters of families: would they take more care to have their children and servants worship God, we should have it otherwise; but if we give our domestics the opportunity of seeing our bad qualities, and af-

ford them none to learn our good ones, how can we expect they should have any sense of religion? They know we offend God by many rash words and sinful actions; but they do not see us repenting and asking God's pardon, by solemn prayers and applications to the throne of grace. Let us then be serious in this matter; and bring religion into our families, and there pay our common tribute of prayer and praise, for the mercies we daily receive. Our Saviour seemed to have respect to this duty, when he made that gracious promise, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midst of them.* And the very petitions of his own prayer are so contrived as to make it most proper for more than one, and which seems naturally to refer to the worshipping God in our families. But,

As we should not neglect to worship God in our closets and families, so it equally concerns us, to frequent the public worship of God in his own house; it being one of the greatest blessings and privileges we can enjoy. Let us then embrace all opportunities, not only on Sundays, but other days, of resorting to the public assemblies, and there join in our solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving: which, offered up with an honest devout mind, will find acceptance, and produce such effects as our closet prayers will not: there being certainly more promises made to public than to private prayers; not but both are good, and absolutely necessary.

And as I am now considering the means and instruments of religion, I cannot omit most seriously to recommend to you, the solemn observation of the Lord's day: I am sensible that some are too superstitious in this matter; and which proves rather a snare to men's consciences than of any service to religion. But to be nice and scrupulous about the Lord's-day service, is far from my intention to recommend. The laws of God and man in a great measure leave this to our own discretion and circumstances. However, thus much is certainly necessary, that every one who professes Christianity, ought to have a religious regard for the Lord's day, by devoting it to spiritual uses both public and private. It has

been observed by some good men, and which I believe may be true, "that a man shall prosper much better in both his spiritual and temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful observance of the Lord's day." And I am further persuaded, that those have little or no sense of religion, who make no conscience of sanctifying, or putting a difference between this and other days; for was there no divine command to have it appropriated to religious uses, which I believe there is, yet to do so, is both prudent and beneficial to mankind; since, besides the civil and temporal conveniences of it, we owe the very being of Christianity among us to the religious observance of this day. And it is worthy our observation, that the most profligate of both sexes, who by wickedness come to an untimely end, do generally impute their misfortunes to their breaking (as they express it) the sabbath day. Under this head, it will be proper to mention another duty, too much neglected, that of frequently coming to the holy sacrament. We can have little hopes of making any great progress in virtue and holiness, if we neglect this holy ordinance, which Christ hath appointed for conveying his grace, and enabling us to overcome our sins, to improve in virtue and goodness. Many indeed are the prejudices, though without reason, against this duty. But whoever designs honestly, and endeavours to lead a Christian life, may with as little scruple, come every month to the communion, as every week to church to say his prayers or hear a sermon. For whoever does not so live as to be qualified to approach the sacrament every month, week, or day, if there is occasion, I fear is not fit to come once in seven years. A due preparation depends not on setting aside some days, to put ourselves in a religious posture; but on the plain, natural frame and temper of our souls, as to their constant inclinations to virtue and goodness. A man that seriously endeavours to live honestly and religiously, may come to the sacrament at an hour's warning, and be a worthy communicant; whilst another who lives a careless, sensual life, shall set apart a week or a month, to exercise acts of repentance, and prepare himself for the communion, and yet not be so worthy a

receiver as the other. Though even such an one may be also worthy, provided he is really honest and sincere in what he is about, and so remembers his vows, as not to return again into his former state of carelessness and sensuality.

I verily believe most of the doubts, fears, and scruples, that generally arise about receiving the sacrament, are without any ground or good reason; and therefore I am of opinion, that every well-disposed person, who has no other design in that action but to do his duty to God, to express his belief and hopes in Jesus Christ, and his thankfulness to God for him, may as safely come at any time to the Lord's table, as come to church to say his prayers. And if so, how culpable are they, who, having so many opportunities, seldom or never join in this solemn institution, which was designed on purpose to be the means of our growing in grace and virtue, in love to God and the world? If then we have any serious regard for our souls, and are truly sensible how much we want the grace of Christ, to lead a life pure and holy, I persuade myself we shall not be strangers at the Lord's table.

And let me recommend to you not a means or instrument of being good, but a principal virtue itself, at all times useful and in season; and that is to walk in love, to study peace and unity, and live in all dutiful subjection to government; endeavouring to promote the public happiness and tranquillity, and not to disturb the public peace, under any pretence, or abet those that do; especially not to make a rent or schism in the church, upon a mere point of state. In all ages, and countries great revolutions have frequently happened. But it was scarce ever known for Christians to separate from the church on that account. They still kept unanimously to their doctrine and worship, and no otherwise concerned themselves in the turns of state, how great soever, than peaceably to submit to the power in being; and heartily to pray to God, so to prosper their government, and direct all their affairs, that all their subjects *might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them, in all godliness and honesty.* And when in any revolution, a prince was advanced to the throne, that was a good man, and

one who would encourage the true religion; in such case they not only readily submitted to him, but acknowledged it as a great blessing of God, for to raise up such a governor to rule over them. *This was the notion, this the practice of the primitive Christians, nay of the Christians in all ages, in matters of this nature; and whatever some may think to the contrary, this is the doctrine of the church of England.*

Let me then persuade those who profess Christianity, to answer those obligations to a holy life, which their religion lays upon them. We call ourselves Christians, and should be much offended if any denied us this title. But if we are so, let us make good our profession, by a suitable life and practice. We profess to entertain the doctrine of the gospel, to be taught and instructed by the best master, to be the disciples of the most perfect institution in the world; to have embraced a religion, which contains the most exact rules for the conduct of our lives, lays down the plainest precepts, sets before us the best patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greatest assistances and encouragements to this purpose. We are furnished with the best arguments to excite us to holiness and virtue; we are awed with the greatest fears, and animated with the best hopes to the practice of it. And whoever makes such a profession as this, obliges himself to live answerably, and not to contradict it, or act contrary to what he professes. For with what face can any man continue in the practice of any known sin, who believes the holy doctrine of the gospel, which forbids all sin, under the highest and severest penalties? Did we but regard the laws of Christianity as we do the laws of the land; were we but persuaded that fraud and oppression, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and religion, will bring men to hell as certainly as treason and felony will bring them under the sentence of the law, this would have a great tendency to keep us from sin; and if the gospel has not this effect upon us, it shows that we do not truly believe it.

If we profess ourselves Christians, it may justly be expected that we should

evidence this by our actions, and not live as the heathens did, who walked in the lusts of the flesh, and of uncleanness; who were intemperate, cruel, and unmerciful. But let us, who profess Christianity, whenever we are tempted to any vile lust, remember and consider what title we bear; by what name we are called, whose disciples we are; and then say, shall we allow ourselves in any impiety or wickedness, who pretend to be endued with that grace of God, which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? Shall we cherish any sinful passion, who have put off the old man with all his evil deeds? If by our lives and actions we contradict that religion which we profess, we thereby prove ourselves hypocrites; and that we have taken up our religion for a fashion, or merely out of custom. So that the reason why we are Christians, instead of Jews, Turks, or heathens, is, because we are born in a Christian country, and that religion came first in our way.

A Christian does not pretend to have more wit or understanding than a Turk or heathen; but he professeth to live better than they, to be more chaste and temperate, more just and charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men. If he fails in these, what signifies all the noise and stir about the gospel and doctrine of Christ? If a man professes himself a Christian, and doth not live better than others, he is a mere pretender in religion. And how great a scandal must this needs be to our blessed Saviour and his gospel? The impieties and vices of professed Christians have caused many severe reflections upon Christianity: for there is nothing can more disparage religion than a lewd and debauched life. This consideration ought greatly to affect us: for a Jew or a Turk is not so great an enemy to Christianity as a wicked and vicious Christian. Therefore, let me beseech Christians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour, and the credit of their religion, that they

would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Christianity. And whoever are resolved to continue in a vicious course, they had better abandon their profession than keep a vizard, which can only frighten others from religion.—Many are apt to pity poor heathens, who never heard of Christ, and sadly to condole their case; but as our Saviour said on another occasion, *weep not for them but let us weep for ourselves.* There is no person so miserable as a degenerate Christian; because he falls into the greatest misery, from the greatest advantages and opportunities of being happy. Those sins which are committed by Christians under the gospel are of deeper dye, and attended with more heinous aggravations than those of heathens. And better had it been if we had never known the gospel, nor never heard of Christ, than, after embracing it, not to depart from iniquity.

Let these arguments prevail to awaken men to a serious consideration and real reformation of their lives; let them oblige all who call themselves Christians, to live up to the fundamental laws of our religion; to love God and our neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him do to us; to mortify our lusts, subdue our passions, and sincerely endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. This indeed would become our profession, would be honourable to religion, and remove one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel. For if ever the Christian religion be effectually recommended, it must be by the holy and unblameable lives of its professors. It would then look with so amiable a countenance as to invite many to it; and carry so much majesty and authority, as to command reverence from its greatest enemies, and make men to acknowledge that of a truth we believe in God, and by our lives adorn the doctrine of Christ, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

SERMON CX.

By DOCTOR BENJ. CALAMY.

The important Concern of a future State.

2 TIM. i. 10.

—And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

By life and immortality is meant, in scripture, that immortal life which our Saviour hath brought to light, or given us assurance of by the revelation of the gospel. For though all men by the light of nature, have some apprehensions of a future state, yet their reasonings about it, when left to themselves, are vain and uncertain, often very wild and extravagant. The best discourses of the heathens, and the wisest philosophers, about another life, were weak and obscure, doubtful and conjectural; nor even in the books of Moses and the prophets are there contained any plain express promises of life eternal. The knowledge men had of it was very dim and imperfect; till the Sun of righteousness appeared; till God was pleased to send from that invisible world, his own most dear Son to live and converse amongst men, in order fully to discover this unknown country, and to conduct us in the only true way to this everlasting happiness; an happiness too great for words to express, or our faculties to comprehend. And yet so much of it is clearly revealed in the gospel, as is abundantly sufficient to raise our thoughts, and excite our sincerest endeavours to obtain it.

By this plain revelation of a future state of immortality, is most illustriously manifested the transcendent goodness and indulgence of our most merciful Creator, in that he will graciously reward our imperfect services and mean performances, with glory so immense, *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the greatness of it.* All we can do bears no proportion to such an ample recompence. Our best actions, so far from deserving to be rewarded, stand

in need of a pardon. All possible duty and obedience is certainly due to the author of our being; and should God have exacted this from us, on account of his sovereign authority over us as his creatures, we had been indispensably obliged to an absolute subjection to him; but that he should, besides, promise to reward our faithful obedience with life eternal, is a most wonderful instance of his infinite grace and goodness. By this revelation of immortal life, is farther demonstrated the exceeding great love of our blessed Saviour, who, by his death and perfect obedience, not only purchased pardon for all our past sins, and redeemed us from eternal misery, (which of itself was an unspeakable mercy,) but also merited and obtained for us an everlasting kingdom of glory, if we truly repent and return to our duty.

The infinite value and efficacy of what our Saviour has done for us, appears in this; that by his most powerful mediation, he procured not only our discharge from punishment, but also inexpressibly glorious rewards for us on most easy and reasonable terms. This is what especially recommends Christianity to us, in that it contains such glad tidings, and offers such mighty arguments to engage us to our duty, as no other religion could ever do. For since hope and fear are the great hinges of all government, the most prevailing passions of human nature, what more agreeable can be proposed to our hope, than to be for ever happy in body and soul, and what more dreadful to our fear than everlasting misery? The utmost that can be said to men, in order to reclaim them from sin, and oblige them conscientiously to observe God's laws, is, that God hath appointed a day when he will call all men to an account for what they have done in this body; who will then reward the sincere faithful Christian with immortal glory, but punish the disobedient and impenitent with everlasting vengeance. And if men will not regard such powerful considerations, nor be concerned or solicitous about their eternal happiness or misery, what other motives are likely to prevail, so as to make any impression on them? For what can be proposed to the reasons and understandings of men, of greater weight and moment, than what

shall become of them in a future eternal state? It shall be therefore my present business to apply myself with all possible plainness and seriousness to three sorts of persons:—To such as seem to doubt of this fundamental doctrine of a future state; to those who profess to believe it, but not heartily; and to such as do really and constantly believe it.

As to the sceptical disputers against religion, let us for once suppose, what they can never prove, that it is doubtful whether there will be another life after this; that all those notions of a judgment to come, a heaven and hell, are mere fables, the inventions of crafty politicians and designing priests; and that all good and virtuous persons have been miserably deceived with vain hopes and fears, and given themselves needless trouble about religion: now, granting all this, yet if we would act prudently, and consult our own safety, nothing is more evident than that we ought to believe and live, as if all these doctrines of religion were most certainly true; because every wise man would run as little hazard as possible, in a concern of so much consequence, and where a mistake must be fatal. Let such therefore consider, how little detrimental it will be to him, who believes and acts according to these principles, should they at last prove false; and what extreme desperate hazard he runs, who doth not believe nor live according to them, should they happen to prove true.

He who believes and acts agreeably to these principles, should they prove false at last, only loses some present gratifications and enjoyments which he denies himself. He indeed crosses the irregular inclinations of his nature, and avoids those excesses which are really hurtful to him; he lives up to the dignity of his nature, is possessed with cares and fears about another world, which the atheist is not wholly free from; and strictly ties himself up to several rules and duties, and perhaps is exposed to some hardships, reproaches, and sufferings for the sake of religion; which is the worst of his case. But then he is at present blessed with a contented life, with peace of conscience, and the joyful expectation of an eternal reward hereafter; and if in the right, he is made for ever. Or should he be mistaken, his

condition will however be no worse than other mortals. All the trouble and pains he was at about religion, will indeed be lost; but if his soul does not survive his body, he will never be sensible of it, nor can the disappointment be troublesome to him, when he goes where all things are forgotten. So that a virtuous religious man may, for the generality, pass his days here more easily and comfortably than any wicked person, and please himself with the hopes or dreams of future glories; and which, if no other than mere fancy, will yet sufficiently recompense any self-denial it puts him upon. In short, if these things at last prove true, then he will be inexpressibly blessed and happy; or, should they be only false and vain hopes, and that there is no other life after this, yet it will be as well with him as with the atheist, in the supposed state of eternal silence and insensibility. All the hazard he runs is, to lose some forbidden pleasures, which in most cases is best for them to be without, even as to this life. If the doctrine of a future state is false, yet he who lives religiously is safe; but if true, he is infinitely happy.

But let us now consider the extreme and desperate hazard which that man runs, who does not believe and act according to these principles, should they at last prove true; for then he ventures the loss of whatever is good and desirable, and of being for ever miserable. Perhaps, nothing would sooner convince such men of their stupid folly, than sometimes to ask themselves, when calm and sober, a few such questions as these:—What though I have endeavoured to persuade myself that religion is no more than a melancholy dream, a political cheat, a common error; yet, should it be true at last, how dismal, and of what dreadful consequence will such a mistake be? What amazing, surprising thoughts, fears, and despair, will attend me, if, when my friends have closed my eyes, I should find myself immediately conveyed into the company of those spirits which I had before denied, and into the presence of that God whose existence I had impudently denied? What horror and confusion must it create, when my infidelity shall be confuted by such a woe-ful experiment, and I find myself suddenly carried to that endless state, which I

would not here believe any thing of? Were the arguments on both sides equal, yet the hazards run are not so; since the one is the chance of being for ever happy, the other of being eternally miserable. Which one consideration fully justifies the discretion of a religious man, in renouncing and despising the glories and pleasures of this world, even though it was uncertain whether there is another life after this. But of what great madness must they be guilty, who reject this doctrine of another life, against many fair probabilities, good reasons, nay, certain demonstrations of its truth; when there is as great evidence in favour of it, as the nature of the thing will admit. When God hath most plainly revealed it from heaven; when this revelation is confirmed by all the signs and testimonies that we can reasonably expect and require; and when he hath implanted in the souls of men, such lively apprehensions of it, as that they must suffer violence to their own minds, before they can force themselves to disbelieve it. For I verily think, was the most desperate sinner to labour and struggle ever so much, to subdue and extirpate this natural persuasion of another life, that yet, after all his pains, he would not be able totally to remove the thoughts and fears of it.

I proceed now to reason with those who, though they profess to believe an immortal life, yet do it not really and heartily; and this I fear is the case of most Christians. But let me ask such, these following questions:—What is the reason that the promise of eternal life, so immense in itself, should so little influence men, and make their endeavours so faint and languid after it? Are any temporal things so valuable as the glories of heaven, or any evils here so dreadful as the miseries of hell? This none can pretend; because the good or evil of this life is of short continuance, but that of the next is durable and eternal. Or, why are Christians so cold and indifferent about the momentous concerns of another life, as if it was of no importance to them? This can be no otherwise accounted for, but that men do not heartily believe what they profess, or not duly consider it.

Most men, whatever they profess or pre-

tend, or however they may deny it, are not sincerely persuaded of the certainty of a future state; their understandings not being rationally convinced of this truth, the belief of it is not firmly rooted in their minds. Indeed, was God to gratify the expectation of some men, and indulge us with the sight of these future glories and miseries which are revealed in the gospel, this might perhaps prevail to convince and reform mankind. Would he give us a view (though but short and transient), of that blessed place where he ever lives, to behold for a few moments the perfect happiness of those blessed souls who are admitted into his beatific presence; or would he open the gates of hell, and permit us to look into that dismal receptacle of wicked spirits, to be eye and ear witnesses of their sad torments, despair, and misery; such a sight perhaps might possibly reform and make us to be what God requires. But God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. He governs us in a method suitable to our rational natures, and gives us such assurances of another life, as are abundantly sufficient to satisfy and convince men; but yet so as that it may be resisted by those who resolve not to believe it. For if the rewards of religion had been present to our senses, there could have been no trial of men; no difference between the wise and considerate, and the foolishly wicked. God will not force a faith on us, but requires it as a matter of choice, an instance of our virtue. There is no faith in believing what we see; such believe not God, but their own eyes. But blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe. The things unseen which God hath revealed, ought to have the same effect as if the other world was visible to us. And as the principles of religion, which concern another life, are not things to be seen, we can only be assured of them by proper arguments and testimonies, about which we must use our reason to judge the force of them, before we can be really convinced by them. Nor is this difficult; it only requires such serious attention of mind, to examine with care and diligence the evidences of a future state, as men commonly use in other affairs, when they would find out the

truth. But the generality of professed Christians are so far from being convinced of the truth of religion by rational arguments, that very few of them ever inquire into the reasons of their belief. Their faith is solely owing to education, and the examples of others, or embraced without any consideration of the grounds and reasons of it. And then no wonder, if a faith thus received without any rational conviction, and so weakly founded, should have but little force or power on men's minds. This is not the faith which our Saviour requires, or that God will accept from those who are capable of acquiring a better. A Mahometan hath as good reason for believing the Alcoran, as such a Christian hath for the belief of Christianity. One great reason therefore of the inefficacy of men's faith is, that their belief of the principles of religion was never well rooted and fixed in their understandings.

But if we are rationally convinced of these truths, and yet our belief is not effectual to reform our lives, the reason of this must be, that we do not really consider them. The understanding hath not such an absolute power over the will, as necessarily to determine it to what is best, for our wills may stubbornly refuse the clearest evidence and strongest reasons, if what is proposed be contrary to our fleshly and worldly lusts. As our will is moved by the understanding to obey its dictates, so is it also most importunately solicited by our appetites and lusts to gratify their several desires and propensities. Hence a great conflict often arises between the truths of religion, which are proposed by our understandings, and such things as proceed from our inferior sensitive faculties; our lusts being checked and crossed by the hopes and fears of another life, tempt us to deny the principles of religion, and with all their power strive to oppose the entertainment of them in our minds. Thus it was with the Jews when our Saviour was on earth; they could not resist those undoubted testimonies which he gave of his being the Son of God; but yet the love of this world, or fear of sufferings, so far prevailed over their wills, as to prevent their becoming his disciples. Though many of the chief rulers believed on him, yet because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of

the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. It is not therefore enough that the truths of religion subdue our understanding by the evidence of reason, but they must also conquer our wills and affections before they can have any lasting effect on our lives. Till our belief hath powerfully wrought on our love, hope, and fear, it can have but little influence on our actions. The way to obtain this consent of our wills and affections to any truth proposed by our understandings, is often most seriously to consider the immense greatness of the happiness afforded to us; the extremity of the misery threatened; how dreadful our condition will be, if we carelessly neglect to provide for it; and how infinitely the glory of heaven surpasses all the pleasures of this life. If we represent and fix in our minds such things as these, it will by degrees so captivate our wills and affections as to make us regard and value this future happiness as our greatest good, and to avoid eternal misery as the greatest evil that can possibly befall us. The concerns of eternity are of such moment, that if we do but patiently attend to, and freely think about them; if we will not suffer our lusts to bias our judgments, or stifle these principles of religion, they will at last awaken our conscience, and prevail above all temptations. And when our faith, by frequent and serious consideration on these important concerns, hath conquered our minds and wills, then will our actions naturally follow. For men will live and act agreeably to what they love, desire, hope for, or fear. So effectually hath Christianity provided for the happiness of men, that nothing can make us miserable, but either not believing, or duly considering the great arguments of religion.

I beg leave to represent the different behaviour of men, as to our Saviour's promises concerning another life, by this plain similitude:—Suppose a person of great power and authority should make us this offer, that if we would follow him, and entirely resign ourselves to his government, he would safely conduct us to a certain country, where we should possess whatever our hearts could wish, be made kings and princes; enjoy all manner of health, riches, and honour, and every

thing that could contribute to our pleasure and satisfaction; and who would give all the security any reasonable man could require, that what was thus promised, should be faithfully performed: but that some among us, not regarding the offer, nor any reasons or arguments he can urge, either through prejudice to his person, or dislike to the conditions, will yet reject him as a deceiver and impostor; such as these are the atheists and infidels. Others, though convinced that all this may be true, not having any just reason to doubt of it; yet they are so pleased with their present circumstances, as not to exchange them for such hope; these are the fond lovers of this world. Others are willing to go to this place, but they would fain live here as long as possible, and when they can stay no longer, are glad to be conveyed to this happy country: these are them who defer their repentance to a death-bed. But there are a few others, who, entirely relying on this person's promises, and preferring them to all present enjoyments, do readily forsake their own concerns, and absolutely resign themselves to his direction; and if in their passage they meet with any dangers or difficulties, cross winds or storms; though this may fill them with doubts and fears, yet they resolve to proceed and venture all; these, and only these, are the true believers. When the consideration of another world is become our most prevailing interest, and the main principle that governs our lives, then is our faith true.

To pretend to believe this great doctrine of a future eternal state, and not to govern ourselves by this persuasion, is the worst folly which a reasonable creature can be guilty of. It was the observation of a great man, "that the strangest monster in nature was a speculative atheist, "one who denies the being of a God and "a future state, excepting one, and that "was the practical atheist, who professed to believe both, but lived, as if he "thought there was neither." Indeed the difference between them is not great; for as the atheist winks at, or rushes blindfold upon eternal ruin, so the wicked believer runs madly upon it, with both his eyes open.

All that remains is, to address those

who sincerely and constantly believe this great truth of another life, who not only assent to this doctrine with their understandings, but make this future happiness their ultimate concern. To these much need not be said; their faith alone will always teach them what to do. He who hath this eternal state ever present to his mind, is fortified against all the temptations of this world, either as to the sufferings of this life, or the being enticed by any of its alluring charms and enjoyments. When the soul by faith views that place where his God and Saviour lives, how mean and contemptible, vile and sordid, will all things here below appear? Faith looks beyond this present scene of life; it beholds this world dissolved, all the glory and pomp of it vanishing; and this curtain being drawn there appears a new world to his view, wherein are joys, pleasures, and honours, substantial and eternal; the prospect of which lessens his esteem for all things temporal. This faith will inspire and animate us with such courage and resolution, as to make us despise all difficulties and dangers, and to think eternal happiness to be a sufficient amends for any pains or trouble to procure it. This conquers the love of life itself, which, though most deeply implanted in our natures, yet those who have been endued with this faith, have not counted their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy. The exploits and achievements of faith, may be seen at large in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews, for the encouragement of all true believers. But yet far greater and more stupendous are the triumphs of faith, recorded of the holy lives and patient deaths of the blessed apostles, primitive martyrs and confessors, who with invincible constancy endured pains and torments, being only assisted by the grace of God, and a lively faith in his son Jesus. They rejoiced and sang praises in the midst of scorching flames, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and gave God thanks that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name; and doubtless God's grace with the like faith would produce in us the same effects, and enable us to do or suffer any thing with the same joy and resolution. Such a faith will fill

the soul with constant peace and satisfaction; so that a good man may delight himself with unseen pleasures, which the worldly man knows not any thing of: this makes him content with whatever is here allotted him, and to be very little concerned about the affairs of this life. He chiefly converses with invisible objects, and therein finds that solid and lasting comfort, which all things temporal can neither give nor take away. This faith cheers his spirits under all calamities and afflictions; and when wearied, or not pleased with the impertinences of this life, he can entertain his mind with those ravishing joys that will never cloy nor satiate. This faith will arm a good man against the fear of death, and strip that king of terrors of all that is dreadful; who considers it only as God's messenger to knock off his fetters, to free him from an earthly prison, and to conduct him to a place of eternal bliss and happiness. All this and much more will a sincere and hearty faith effect; it will afford us a foretaste of this immortal happy state, give us in part an entrance into heaven, and at last the complete enjoyment of it.

Let it then plainly appear by our words and actions, what our faith and hope is; and that we walk by faith, not by sight or sense. Sense is a mean low principle, confined to this world, and can extend no farther than to things present and visible. But the just live by faith; they govern their actions not by what they see, but by what they believe and hope for, looking beyond this life for such things as are eternal. Let us not be ashamed of this our design before men; but whatever they think of us, let us resolve to be for ever happy, and to use this world as if we were shortly to leave it; so to improve our time, as to remember it will be soon swallowed up in eternity. And blessed be God, who hath set before us such mighty hopes, given us such glorious promises, made such a plain and clear revelation of this eternal life, by Jesus Christ, and by him taught us the true way of obtaining it; who, having suffered for our sins in our nature, entered into the highest heavens, to prepare mansions of glory for all his faithful followers.

S E R M O N CXI.

DR. BENJ. CALAMY.

The Certainty of our Resurrection proved.

1 COR. XV. 35.

But some men will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

AFTER St. Paul had firmly established the truth and reality of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, he proceeds to infer from thence the certainty of our own resurrection. *If Christ, says he, be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen.* That is, "it can no longer seem impossible or incredible that God should raise the dead, since you have so plain and certain an example of it, in the person of our Lord, who having been truly dead and buried, is now alive, and hath appeared unto many, with the visible marks of his crucifixion still remaining on his body: and the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, is able also to quicken our mortal bodies."

When the apostle preached unto the Athenians, concerning the resurrection of the dead, the philosophers mocked at him, and entertained his doctrine with contempt. Indeed it was one of the last things the heathens received into their belief, and is yet the greatest objection against Christianity. *How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?* are questions that almost every one is ready to make, especially those who love to cavil at religion. I shall, therefore, from these words, shew, that the resurrection of the dead, even of the very same body which died and was buried, contains nothing in it impossible or incredible. And then observe what difference the scripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal flesh.

The most common received opinion amongst Christians is, that, at the last

day, we shall rise again with the flesh in which we died. Most of the ancient fathers did believe and teach, that at the general resurrection men would be restored to the very same bodies which were laid in the grave; and that as our Saviour Christ arose with his former flesh, bones, and limbs, so likewise shall we at the resurrection. That the primitive Christians did generally believe and expect that they should at the resurrection rise again with the very same bodies, in which they lived on earth, evidently appears from the heathen's malice and envy towards their dead bodies, which they would reduce to ashes, and then scatter and throw them into the air and rivers, thinking thereby to defeat their hopes of a resurrection. Such of the ancient Christians as defended or explained this article of the resurrection of the dead, had generally recourse to such principles and arguments to suppose the very same body, flesh, and members to be raised again, that the soul animated in this life; and, in truth, this is the most plain and easy notion of a resurrection. For nothing dies and is corrupted but the body; the soul goes upward and returns to God; and therefore nothing can be properly said to be raised again, but only that very body which died and was corrupted. If at the last day God gives a new body to our souls, that cannot literally be called the resurrection of our bodies; since the most proper and useful signification of the word is, that the same flesh which was separated from the soul at death, should be again vitally united to it.

The scripture in many places assures us, that the very same flesh shall be raised again. I will not insist on the words of Job, that though *worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God*; because I cannot think the primary and original meaning of them doth at all relate to the resurrection, but a plain prophecy of his own deliverance, and an high expression of his confident hope in God, that he would vindicate his innocence, and bring him out of all his troubles. But there are several other texts in the New Testament more applicable to the present occasion. As when St. Paul tells us, *that this corruptible shall*

put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; meaning the body we now live in, which shall one day lie down in the dust. And the scripture, describing the places from whence the dead shall rise, plainly intimates, that the same bodies which died shall revive again. Thus we read, *that they who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting death*. The metaphor of sleeping and awaking, by which our death and resurrection is here expressed, seems to imply, that when we rise again, our bodies will be as much the same as those we lived in, as they are when we now awake from sleep. Again, *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell (that is the grave) delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works*. But if the same flesh shall not be raised again, what occasion will there be to ransack the graves at the last day? The sea can give up no other bodies than what it received; nor the grave deliver up any but those that were laid therein. And was it not necessary, that we should rise with the very same bodies, the graves need not be opened, but we might rest there for ever. St. Paul also tells us, that our Saviour *shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*; which can only be meant, that this our present body of flesh and blood shall be restored to life again.

If we consider the several instances and examples of those, who either immediately ascended into heaven, or after death were restored again to life, they all seem to confirm this opinion, that we shall rise at the last day with the very same flesh and blood which we had here. Enoch and Elias were translated to heaven in their terrestrial bodies. And they whom our Saviour recalled to life, or rose with him at his resurrection, appeared in the very same bodies they had before their dissolution. These being the examples and types of the general re-

urrection, ours therefore must resemble theirs; and we must also appear at the last day with the same bodies we lived in here. Even our blessed Saviour, who was the first fruits of them that shall be, raised his own body, and appeared to his disciples with the very prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and with all the other marks of his crucifixion: *Behold my hands and my feet; says he, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* From whence it seems to follow, that in our resurrection, we shall be conformable to our Saviour's, and resume the very same bodies that were laid in the sepulchre.

Lastly, the ancients have urged for a proof of the resurrection of the same body, that the exact justice and righteousness of God requires it. Since God's justice, which consists in the equal dispensation of rewards and punishments, will seem much obscured, at least not so illustriously manifested and displayed to the world, unless the same body of flesh be raised again; that as the body was partner with the soul in all her actions, whether good or evil, so it should hereafter share with her in rewards and punishments; it being but just that the same body which sinned should be punished; and that the very flesh which pleased God, should at the last day be exalted to glory, and receive a just recompence of reward, for whatever hardships and trouble it underwent here. Having thus evinced the resurrection of the same body, I shall proceed to shew that there is nothing in this impossible or incredible.

"God can distinguish and preserve
"unmixt from all other bodies each
"man's particular body, when dissolved
"into dust and atoms, however distantly
"dispersed, and recollect and unite
"them together; because God is infinite
"in wisdom, power, and knowledge.
"He can tell the number of the stars,
"and call them all by their names. He
"measures the water in the hollow of
"his hand, metes out the heavens with
"a span, and comprehends the dust of
"the earth in a measure; he numbers
"the hairs of our heads, and not so
"much as a sparrow falls to the ground

"without his knowledge:" and is it incredible, that such an infinite understanding should distinctly know the several particles of dust into which the bodies of men are mouldered; that he should observe the various changes they undergo, and plainly discern to whom they belong? Can it be thought impossible, that he who at first formed us, *in whose book all our members are written, from whom our substance was not hid when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth;* should not again know every atom whereof our bodies are composed? If any curious artist knows every pin and part of a machine that he makes, so as, when taken in pieces, he can distinguish one part from another, and readily assign to each its proper place, and exactly dispose them into the same figure and order they were in before; can we suppose that the almighty Architect of the world is ignorant of and unacquainted with the several parts and materials of which this our earthly tabernacle is framed and composed? At the first creation of the world, all things lay confused, in a vast heap of rude and indigested chaos, till by the voice of the Omnipotent they were separated and framed into those distinct bodies, whereof the beauty and excellent order of the world doth now consist; and why may not the same power, at the consummation of all things, out of the ruins and rubbish of the world, collect the several relics of our corrupted bodies, reduce them to their proper places, restore them to their primitive shapes, and frame them into the same individual bodies they were parts of before?

But it may be objected, that it often happens for the bodies of men to be devoured by the beasts, fishes, and other animals, which are afterwards eaten by men, and converted into the substance of their bodies; and in some places even for men to feed on human flesh; whereby the substance of one man's body becomes part of another's; and then how can both rise at the last day with the very same bodies?

To which I answer, that the body of man does not always continue in the same state, or consist of the same mat-

ter; but is perpetually spending and renewing itself, every day losing and gaining new matter. This is undeniably certain from experience. For so much as our bodies grow, so much new matter is added to them, over and besides the repairing of what is continually spent. And after a man comes to his full growth, he usually wastes and carries off, by insensible perspiration every day, in proportion five parts to eight, of what he eats and drinks. So that every man must change his body several times in a year. Indeed, the bones do not change so often as the fluid and fleshy parts of the body: but they also change, because they grow; for whatever growth is nourished and spends, or otherwise it would not want repair. If the matter of a man's body, which he had at any time of his life, be raised, it is as much his own, and the same body, as that which he had at his death, and generally much more perfect. Besides, it is a very small and inconsiderable part of what is eaten and descends into the stomach, that turns into nourishment: the far greater quantity going off by excretions and perspirations. Or if it did not, to what a vast monstrous bulk should we grow to in a few years? So that was the body of a man eaten by cannibals, very little of it would pass into the substance of their bodies. Or was it more, there cannot be so much as is before gone from the same man's body. If a man lives thirty or forty years, his body hath undergone many new repairs in that time, and yet in the sense of all mankind, it is the same body. Suppose a corpulent man to fall into a gradual consumption, must this man at the resurrection have no more of his body than he had when at the hour of his death? Would it not then be the same body, if made up of the parts it had at the beginning of his consumption? If it be, then the same holds as to other times of his life. And consequently this objection of cannibals devouring men, is of no force to destroy the possibility of the resurrection.

Perhaps it may be thought by some, unworthy of God to concern himself about such trifling matters, or inconsistent with his ease and happiness, to mark and observe all the particles of dust into which the several bodies of men are dis-

solved, so as exactly to distinguish and preserve each entire and unmixed, and at last restore them to their old bodies.

It is the greatest excellency and person of the divine Providence to extend itself even to the least things, so that nothing is exempted from its care and influence. To imagine the government of the world is a burden to God, is to entertain very mean conceptions of him. Because we are of such weak and frail natures, as that a little business and employment soon tires us, does it therefore follow, that to direct, order, and govern the several affairs of this world, must give trouble and interruption to the infinite pleasure and happiness of almighty God?

Our dust being thus preserved and collected together by God, he can easily remake and rebuild the same bodies which were dissolved. That this is possible must be acknowledged by all who believe the history of the world's creation, as to God's forming the first man Adam out of the dust of the ground. For if the body of man turns to dust after death, it becomes what it was originally; and surely the same power that first made it of dust, may as easily remake it when reduced into dust again. Nor is this more wonderful than the formation of an human body in the womb; yet of this we have daily experience, though as great a miracle, as extraordinary an instance of divine power, as the resurrection of it can possibly be. And was it not so common a thing, it would be thought incredible, that such a beautiful fabric as is the body of man, consisting of nerves, bones, flesh, veins, blood, and other parts, should be produced as we see it is. Why then is it not as easy to believe it shall hereafter be rebuilt, when crumbled into dust? Had we only heard or read of the curious formation of man, it would have been as natural for us to have asked "how are men made, and with what bodies are they born?" as now to inquire concerning the resurrection, *how are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?*

When God hath raised again the same body out of the dust wherein it was dissolved, he can enliven and make it the same living man, by uniting to it the

same soul and spirit which did formerly inhabit there. That this is possible we have several undoubted examples thereof, in those whom the prophets, our blessed Saviour, and his apostles, raised from the dead. Even our Saviour himself, after he was dead and buried, rose again and appeared unto his disciples and others, to whom he was known; who had clear evidence and conviction that he was the same person they had seen expire on the cross. Well therefore might St. Paul say, *why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* To raise our bodies from death is not so great an act, as first to create them. If God, by the word of his power, could make the heavens and the earth of no pre-existent matter, why should we doubt but that the same God by his mighty power can also raise to life, those who, though dead, do not cease to be? For although we cannot answer all the difficulties and objections which the sceptics, wicked and prophane, make against this doctrine; nor can exactly discover how our bodies will rise, or the nature of them; yet this ought not to weaken our belief of this most important article of our Christian faith. It is sufficient that an almighty being, to whom nothing is impossible, hath solemnly promised to raise our mortal bodies after death to life again. Let such therefore as despise, oppose, or object to this doctrine, try their ability on the common appearances of nature; let them rationally explain things that daily happen, before they disbelieve a resurrection, when Omnipotency stands engaged to perform it. Do they know how their bodies were framed, fashioned and curiously wrought? Can they give a satisfactory account of this glorious structure, their bodies, and the several parts thereof; consisting of members, blood, heart, veins, arteries, and nerves? Or how the body came to be fenced with bones and sinews, skin and flesh? When they can answer these and other difficult questions, concerning the formation of their own body, it will be then time enough to solve all the objections and difficulties about the resurrection of it. But if to do this, they must have recourse to the infinite power and wisdom of the First

Cause, the sole Governor and great Sovereign of the world; why should they doubt but that the same power can quicken and enliven that body when rotten and returned to dust, which it first formed? Let us therefore not perplex ourselves about some difficulties which arise concerning this doctrine of the resurrection; for it is no absurdity to suppose an infinite power can effect such things as seem impossible to our finite beings; but rather let us believe what God hath revealed concerning it. I proceed

To consider the difference which the scripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal flesh. Our conceptions of a future state are indeed very dark and imperfect; all we know of it is from the scriptures, which describe it either by representing the several evils and inconveniences we shall be freed from; or by comparing the glory that shall be revealed, with such things as are here most admired and esteemed. Hence it is called an *inheritance, a kingdom, a throne, a crown, a sceptre, a rich treasure, a river of pleasures, a splendid robe, an exceeding eternal weight of glory*. Not that the happiness of another world consists in outward joys and pleasures: but these things being here most coveted and desired, are made use of to represent the transcendent blessedness of a future state, though of a different nature, and infinitely surpassing the greatest happiness of this world. They are only little comparisons to help our weak apprehensions; but we shall never know the glories of the next life till we enjoy them. For though from the description the scripture gives us of another world, we may frame a confused idea of it, yet we shall never have a complete notion thereof till we enter into it. However enough is revealed concerning our future happiness, to raise our thoughts and affections above the fading beauties and flattering glories of this world; to make us sensible how mean and unsatisfying all human pleasures are, to excite and engage our most earnest endeavours to attain it. For the scriptures inform us, that our bodies at the resurrection, will be raised *immortal and incorruptible, glorious and spiritual*.

At the resurrection our bodies will be immortal and incorruptible; for *this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* Though the bodies of the damned will be raised immortal and incorruptible, because intolerable pain and misery will be their portion for ever; yet these words do farther signify to the blessed an exemption from all bodily evils, and whatever is penal, afflictive, or uneasy to us. Were we at the general resurrection to receive the same frail bodies again, subject to the miseries we now suffer, no considering person would willingly take it again; he would rather it should rot in the grave, than be bound fast to all eternity to such a cumbersome clod of earth; for such a resurrection is more like a condemnation to death again, than a resurrection to life. The best we can say of this earthly house of clay, the tomb and sepulchre of our souls, is, that it is a building which will soon be dissolved and tumble into dust; that we shall not always be confined to this doleful prison, but in a little time be delivered from this bondage of corruption, be disengaged from this burden of flesh, and admitted *into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Alas! what frail brittle things are these bodies of ours? How soon are they disordered and discomposed? To what number of diseases, pains, and infirmities are they continually liable? How doth the least distemper disturb our minds, interrupt our ease and rest, and make life a burden? If any part of our body suffers pain, what torment and anguish doth it create; or, when our bodies are well and in health, yet to what labours and perfect drudgery must we submit to serve their necessities, to provide for their subsistence, and supply their wants; to repair their decays, to preserve and keep them in health? How are we forced every night to enter into the confines of death, if not to cease to be for a time, yet at least to slumber away many hours without any useful and rational thoughts; and this only to keep in repair those carcasses of clay, and enable them to perform the labours and business of the ensuing day? In short, so long as these frail, weak, and dying bodies, subject to so many evils and inconveniences, are so

closely united to our souls; we cannot possibly expect much ease, rest, or happiness in this life. Our hope and comfort therefore is, that in a little time we shall be delivered from this burden of flesh; when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, nor pain; when we shall hunger nor thirst no more; neither see nor feel the light of the sun; *for the Lamb, the Son of God shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water.*

O when shall we arrive to those happy regions, where we shall enjoy constant and uninterrupted pleasure both of body and mind, and be never more exposed to any of those evils and inconveniences, to which we are liable in this state of pilgrimage? where we shall live the life of angels; and be clothed with spiritual glorious bodies; neither subject to those weaknesses and decays, nor want that daily sustenance and continual recruit which our present bodies cannot subsist without. That perfect and complete happiness, which all good men shall enjoy in the other world, consists in having a mind free from all trouble, and a body exempted from all pains and diseases. Thus will our mortal bodies be raised immortal; they will not only by the power of God be always preserved from death, but their nature will be totally changed and altered, so as not to retain the same principles of mortality and corruption; for they cannot, says our Saviour, die any more. Our bodies will also be raised in glory. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* Our heavenly bodies will be like the glory and splendour of the sun. For Christ *will fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body*; the splendour of which we may conceive, by the visions of St. Peter at the transfiguration of our Saviour, whose face *did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow.* Some imagine that the excellency of our heavenly bodies will chiefly arise from the happiness of our souls; whose felicity will be and appear in the brightness of our countenance, illustrating them with beauty and splendour.

Lastly, at the resurrection we shall

rise with spiritual bodies, but not of a spiritual substance, for that is a contradiction? it being impossible for it to be both a spiritual and bodily substance. Spiritual is here opposed, not to corporeal, but to natural or animal; signifying thereby, the subtilty and purity of our heavenly bodies. In this state our spirits are forced to serve and attend on our bodies: but in the other world, our bodies shall wholly serve our spirits, minister to, and depend upon them; a natural body is fitted for this lower, sensible, earthly world; a spiritual body is suited to a spiritual invisible state, to live like saints and angels in heaven. This flesh is one of the greatest and most dangerous enemies we have; for it continually tempts and solicits us to evil; it rebels against reason, and is ungovernable; *the law in our members wars against the law in our minds, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin*; and when the spirit is willing, *the flesh is weak*. We are now in a state of warfare, and must be always on our guard, continually arming and defending ourselves against the assaults of the flesh, and all its impetuous motions. How doth it hinder us in all our religious duties? How soon are our minds tired, when employed in any divine or spiritual meditation; and how easily diverted from such noble exercises? Well therefore, might St. Paul so mournfully complain; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Why! even death will do this; that will give us a full and final deliverance. When once we arise unto life, we shall no more feel those struggles of the spirit with the flesh, which are now so troublesome and uneasy to us. Our flesh will then cease to torment and tease our souls with evil inclinations, immoderate desires, and unreasonable passions; but being spiritualized, purified, and free from all earthly affections, it will become a fit and proper instrument of the soul in all her divine and heavenly employments; it will not be weary of singing praises unto Almighty God to all eternity; it will want no respite or refreshment, meat or drink, but take an infinite delight in doing the will of God. In these things chiefly consists the difference between

this mortal flesh and our bodies at the resurrection. I shall now make a few inferences tending to practice.

And the best way to prepare ourselves for those heavenly spiritual bodies, which shall be bestowed on us at the resurrection, is by continually cleansing and purifying our souls from all fleshly lusts, and by degrees weaning ourselves from all earthly and sensual pleasures and delights. We must refine our affections, raise and exalt them in the contemplation of things above; we must take off our hearts, and leisurely disengage them from what is present and sensible, in order frequently to think of and converse with things spiritual and invisible: that so soul and body may here in some degree be acquainted with those objects, or spiritual delights and pleasures, which will hereafter be presented to us. A soul wholly immersed in this earthly body is no way qualified for those celestial and glorious mansions which God hath provided for us. An earthly sensual mind is so captivated with bodily pleasures, as to be incapable of relishing or enjoying such as are spiritual, though infinitely greater and more to be preferred. But if we subdue and mortify our carnal inclinations, we shall thereby fit and prepare ourselves for another state. When our souls are thus spiritualized, they will soon grow weary of this flesh, and long for their departure; they will be ready and glad to go hence, that they may live and abide in a body suitable to their rational and spiritual appetites.

From hence also we may give some account of the different degrees of future glory. For though all good men shall have glorious bodies, yet they shall not be all equal in glory. They shall all shine as stars, and yet *as one star differs from another in glory*; so also is the resurrection of the dead. Some will have more bright and resplendent bodies than others. Those who have done their Lord eminent and extraordinary service, who have bravely and courageously suffered for his name; or who, by the constant exercise of severity and mortification, have arrived to a greater measure of purity and holiness than others, shall shine as stars of the first magnitude. The

purest and most spiritual bodies will be given to the most heavenly and spiritual souls. And this surely is no small encouragement for us diligently to proceed in the ways of virtue and piety; since the more we wean ourselves from sensible objects and things present, the more glorious and heavenly will our bodies be at the resurrection.

Let these considerations then engage us patiently to bear those afflictions, sicknesses, and bodily pains, with which we are exercised in this life. Let us hold out a little longer, for the time of our redemption draws near; when our tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall sigh nor sorrow no more. We are now pilgrims and strangers travelling towards the heavenly Canaan, and must therefore expect to struggle with many straits and difficulties; but when we arrive to our journey's end, that will make amends for all. We shall then be in a quiet safe harbour, out of the reach of those storms and dangers that here surround us; we shall then be at home in our father's house, no more exposed to those inconveniences we now are subject to. And let us not forfeit all this happiness only for want of a little more patience and constancy; but let us hold out to the end, that we may receive an abundant recompence for all the trouble and uneasiness in this our passage, and be instated in rest and peace, perfect and eternal. Let these considerations in particular arm and fortify us against the fear of death; for death is now conquered and disarmed, and cannot hurt us. It indeed separates us from the body for a while, but this only in order to our receiving it far more pure and glorious. Let us therefore no longer profess this hope of the resurrection unto life; or else with more courage expect our own dissolution, and with greater patience bear that of our friends and relations. Let us not fear to go down in the house of rottenness, to lie in the dust; for when God destroys this house of clay, he will raise it again infinitely more splendid and glorious. Let us take care so to live, as that we be *worthy to obtain the other world, and the resurrection from the dead*. Let us in a moral sense, *rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and then*

the second death will have no power over us. Since therefore we have this comfortable hope of a glorious resurrection unto life eternal; let us *purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*; let us hold fast our profession, and steadfastly adhere to our duty, whatever we suffer here; knowing we *shall reap if we faint not*. Let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON CXII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

Dean of Down.

ON THE RELATIVE DUTIES.

On the Duties of the Married State.

EPHES. v. 33.

Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

THE apostle's principal design, in this epistle to the Ephesians, is, to deter these new converts from all those corruptions that reigned in the heathen world, and exhort them to that purity of life and manners, enjoined by the gospel: that they should *put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of their mind, putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*.

Many of the deities worshipped by the heathen world, were the greatest monsters of iniquity and uncleanness that ever were heard of. And therefore it is no wonder if these worshippers thought there was no evil in those actions, which were authorized by the example of their gods. Nay, on the contrary, forasmuch as all religion directs us to the imitation of what we adore, hence it came to pass, that the most flagitious and monstrous impurities were not only practised, but enjoined, enjoined as necessary rites of adoration, and actually performed in

their very temples. And as this was the practice in many other places, it was remarkably so at Ephesus, (whither this epistle is directed,) as we are assured by Strabo and Athenæus. And therefore the apostle's design, in this epistle, is to reclaim his converts of that city from those abominations to which they were before devoted.

And in order to do this, he gives them to understand, that the God they were now taught to worship, was a Being of infinite perfection and purity; and therefore, to make their adoration acceptable to him, they must put off their former pollution, and imitate his purity: they *must put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

For, however the guilt of their former corruptions might be alleviated from the ignorance in which they were then involved, yet were they now, from the advantage of better information and instruction, altogether without excuse, if they committed the same enormities. For, saith he, *Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light: but fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, or unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

And soon after this, the apostle subjoins the duty of husbands and wives; the duty of submission and respect in the one, and of love and tenderness in the other: modestly implying, that a religious regard to the matrimonial contract was the most natural and rational method of avoiding those sensual corruptions, into which the heathen world was sunk. And when he hath shewn, that the original union of one man with one woman was an emblem of the mystical union of Christ and his church, he adds, *Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, &c. That is, but whatever this mystery may be, however, setting aside the mystery, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

Having thus explained the occasion and intent of these words, I now pro-

ceed, from them to lay down to you the duties of the married state.

I shall begin with the husband's duty to his wife. And this may be reduced to these three heads; love, fidelity, and support.

First, Husbands are to love their wives. And this they are engaged to do, from all the natural and moral motives that can influence a rational creature.

And, first, it is observed, that an equality is necessary to the establishment of an entire affection and friendship in life. For this reason, tyrants and slaves are no more to be tied together in the bands of love, than an ass and an elephant can be harnessed under one yoke. Equality is necessary to union; and therefore love is observed, either to find all persons equal, or to make them so. This the great Author of our nature well knew, and therefore he created the first pair perfectly equal; and, to express this equality, as divines observe, he formed Eve from Adam's side: the woman was taken from that part, rather than from any other, either higher or lower, to signify, that she is neither her husband's mistress, nor yet his slave: that as she is not to insult, so she is not to be insulted; but to be treated upon a foot of natural equality, with affection and regard.

Again, Union is necessary to love: to have the same desires and aversions. For this reason God Almighty made the first pair of one flesh. *And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.*

And this natural union of the first pair was but an emblem of that moral and mystical union, that was to be established between all succeeding pairs, that should be joined together in the holy state of matrimony to the end of the world.

And hence it is, that when Adam had declared his sense of this union that joined him to Eve, he adds, as from himself, (yet most evidently by divine appointment,) *therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh:* signifying, that the bonds of marriage should from that moment be more powerful than the bonds of such a shameful

and corrupt course, read Solomon's reflections, read the observations of the wisest of mankind, upon the danger of such a conduct, and the sure ruin that awaits it, in the 6th and 7th chapters of his Proverbs.

To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, lust not after her beauty in thine heart, neither let her take thee with her eye-lid. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife, whosoever toucheth her, shall not be innocent. And surely it is full as certain, that he that goeth in to a polluted prostitute, whosoever toucheth her, shall neither be innocent nor unhurt; but doth in truth take fire into his bosom, almost in a literal sense.

Again, saith the wise man, *Whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding. He that doth it, destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away.* Nor is either the wound or the reproach less certain in the commerce of a mercenary harlot. The arts with which these wily creatures lie in wait to deceive and to destroy the thoughtless unwary part of mankind, are most admirably set forth in the 7th chapter of the Proverbs; where, after the wise man hath described the lewd woman's shameless allurements at large, he then adds the sure ruin of the simple one that was caught by them. *With her much fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him; he goeth after her straitway, as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird lusteth to the snare, and knoweth not, that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*

And although vicious liberties are commonly regarded as less criminal on the side of the man, yet in reality, and in the

sight of God, it is not so; because the obligation to fidelity is equal, is exactly the same, on both sides. And therefore the same apostle that tells us (1 Cor. vii.) that *the wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband*; tells us also, in the same place, that *the husband likewise hath not power over his own body, but the wife.*

It is true the reputation of families is more concerned in the chastity of the wife; but, on the other hand, the interest and well-being of families is, for the most part, more concerned in the chastity of the husband; because he hath it more in his power (generally speaking) to destroy the fortune of the family by vicious extravagance in this point than the woman hath; and actually does so, in twenty instances to one. And therefore, however men may be indulged in corruptions of this kind, from the liberties of a looser education, and from the worst title in the world, the privilege of a long practice in sin; perhaps too from the partiality of human laws; yet are they, both from the law of nature and the law of God, under equal ties of fidelity with the wife, and under equal guilt from the violation of it. And this we know, that *no whoremonger, or unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.* And therefore, *let no man deceive you with vain words; for, because of these things, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

The last duty of the husband is to support and maintain his wife; and this ariseth from the consideration of their being one flesh. Therefore the apostle tells us, that *men ought so to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet (saith he) hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.*

From hence it appears, that the same obligations that are upon you, for your own support and nourishment, engage you also to the support and nourishment of your wives. And this is accounted the more direct and immediate duty of the husband, because the administration and management of the fortune is (generally speaking) in his hands; that being, by the divine appointment, his province; as be-

ing better fitted by nature for the fatigues and hurry of life; and for the most part endowed with a greater strength both of body and mind, to enable him to make a proper provision for his family. I say for the most part, because there are many particular instances where this care rests chiefly upon the wife, when she is found blessed by Almighty God with better talents for those purposes. But, generally speaking, the business of the woman is the care of her house and family, to relieve the man from the fatigue of domestic concerns; and to be in this respect a help-meet for him; and to see that what he provides is prudently managed, and carefully preserved.

And thus I have gone through the several duties which the husband owes to the wife, viz. love, fidelity, and support.

S E R M O N CXIII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The same subject continued.

EPHES. v. 33.

Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

I PROCEED now to the duties of the wife; and these are, love, fidelity, and obedience.

First, She is to love her husband; and that upon the same principles, and for the very same reasons, that he is to love her.

First, Because they are one flesh; *for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh.* And in truth they are joined together upon terms of as entire and thorough a communion, as if they were one soul, and one body: and secondly, because their interests are in all respects perfectly the same, which is the truest foundation of friendship. The husband's happiness naturally tends to make the wife happy at the same time; and his misery, to make her miserable; his riches make her rich; and his

poverty makes her poor. It is always their interest to wish and avoid, to desire and to detest, the same things; and surely to have the very same interest, the same desires and aversions, to be happy in each other's happiness, and miserable in each other's misery, are the strongest engagements, and the surest foundations of entire friendship, and perfect affection, that can possibly be imagined.

Secondly, She is to be faithful to him; and as the reasons of fidelity are the same both in the husband and the wife, the crime of infidelity is more shameful and scandalous in the woman; because it is committed against the rules of a more reserved and virtuous education, and against the natural decency and modesty of the sex; and, at the same time, is of far worse consequence to the honour of families, because it brings a lasting stain of infamy along with it: and, what is worse than all this, it often robs the right heir of his inheritance, and substitutes a spurious offspring into his place; an injury that is the more to be dreaded and avoided, because, when once it is committed, it is impossible to be repaired.

Thus much, however, may be said in honour of that sex, that this crime is less frequent among them; and rarely committed till the husband's infidelity, or ill conduct, hath first provoked to it. And this is the true reason why the infidelity of the wife reflects so much scandal and dishonour upon the husband, because (generally speaking) his own vices and ill conduct have brought the evil upon him. And therefore the only true way of securing your own reputation in this point, as well as your wife's virtue, and the honour of your family, is to behave yourself with so much fidelity and tenderness towards her, as may entirely engage her affections, as well as her conscience, to you and you only.

And indeed, let any man reflect seriously upon the treatment the generality of wives meet with from their husbands, and then think impartially, whether they have not too much reason to be provoked at their rudeness and neglect. Before marriage they are adored and preferred before all the world; but soon, very soon after, they are slighted and disregarded, as if they were unworthy of common esteem;

and they are slighted for the very same reasons for which they should be respectfully and tenderly treated. They observe, at the same time, that their husbands can still treat other women with respect and complaisance; and that other men still continue to use them with respect and complaisance, and none but the husband slights and despises them; as if marriage, which is the strongest engagement to tenderness and affection, were but a privilege for contempt and rudeness. This is in truth provoking; and I am satisfied, the generality of those women who have been so unhappy and so wicked as to violate the marriage vow, have been provoked to it by the rudeness and neglect of their husbands, or urged to it in revenge of their prior falsehood.

It is not indeed to be imagined, that men should treat their wives with the same reserve and formal complaisance after marriage; that the freedom and ease of friendship forbids: but why friendship and freedom should be a reason for ill treatment, I must own I cannot conceive. I am sure they should be reasons of a very different conduct; and I believe there is not a righter rule in life, or of more importance for the preservation of friendship, than this, never to let familiarity exclude respect.

But, after all wives that are so unhappy as to be too much provoked by the ill-treatment of their husbands, should always remember, that their husbands' guilt doth not justify theirs; and much less will neglect or rudeness in the husband justify infidelity in the wife. There are arts of decency and good behaviour which have inexpressible charms; and if a woman can but have constancy enough to practise these, and to continue in well-doing, they are almost irresistible; and it is scarcely possible to imagine any husband so brutal as not to be at last reclaimed by them. And women would be more solicitous to reclaim their husbands in this manner, by a course of good behaviour, if they considered that in so doing they consulted their own real interest, and the interest of their children; and greatly recommended themselves and their concerns to the favour and protection of Almighty God; and at the same time saved a soul alive. Whereas the

contrary behaviour can tend to nothing but the utter ruin of their children, and their own mutual destruction, both of body and soul.

The next duty a wife owes her husband is assistance; that is, aid, comfort, relief, and support, in all the anxieties and exigencies of life. And hence it was, that when Adam was created, God Almighty declared it not good for him to be alone; and therefore he adds, *I will make him a help meet for him*. And therefore such wives as think it beneath them to trouble themselves about low domestic concerns, that are above the care of their husbands and family, would do well to consider how they answer the end of their creation. Surely they cannot imagine they were made for no higher or nobler ends than to dress, or visit, or to be esteemed, like a statue or picture, for a fine shape, or a fair outside. Are these purposes worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness? No; God Almighty intended them not only for the support of society, but for consolation, friendship, and assistance; to be partakers of the husband's joys and cares; to lighten the labours of life, and increase all its enjoyments, by sharing in them. For, as cares are lessened by being divided, joys are increased by being communicated. And therefore what can be more desirable in life, than to have a prudent, a faithful, and an affectionate friend, who is perfectly in our interest, to alleviate all the evils, and increase all the happinesses that befall us? And to this purpose, God Almighty hath endowed the other sex, not only with more native tenderness, but likewise with a certain vivacity and gaiety of heart that bears up against misfortunes; or, at least, is not so long cast down under them, as men usually are. Their spirits are more light and volatile, and their imagination more sprightly; and this prompts them to think and speak a thousand agreeable things, which would never enter into the heavy heart of an anxious and thoughtful husband; and by that means inspires a cheerfulness which is not natural to him, and is a wonderful relief to the toils of life. And, without question, this is one great reason, why God Almighty hath endowed the other sex with a greater quickness and readiness of speech

upon common occurrences, that the husband, upon his return into his house from the cares and labours of the day, might be entertained with cheerful accounts of his family affairs, and with agreeable inquiries into his own conduct; not without pleasing and proper reflections upon both. And therefore that disposition to discourse, which melancholy and those husbands are wont to censure as troublesome and impertinent in their wives, is, in truth, an instinct most wisely and graciously appointed of Almighty God, for the relief and joy of the conjugal state; and life would (in endless instances) be an insupportable load without it.

What therefore women are concerned to do upon this account, is this; not to speak less than they are naturally inclined to do, but to endeavour to speak better than the generality of them are taught, or wont to do. It is not their business to check the instinct that God Almighty hath endowed them with, but to direct it, and make it answer its true end, the relief and delight of their husband and their household; whereas, when it is diverted from its right end, and degenerates either into impertinent garrulity, or into brawling and abuse, it forms one or other of the most hateful and unbecoming characters in life. And therefore Solomon rightly observes (Prov. xxi.) that *it is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house*. That is, it is better to be confined to one spot on the top of a house, exposed to all the injuries of the weather, than enjoying all the advantages of shade and shelter, to be exposed to the assaults of a boisterous tongue. And again, *it is better to dwell in the wilderness*, saith he, *than with a contentious and angry woman*; that is, it is better to be banished the society of mankind than be confined to such society as that.

Now there are two things required of women, in order to make their conversation agreeable; the first is, *the ornament of a meek spirit*, without which no other ornament will become them. And this, the apostle assures us, *is in the sight of God of high price*: nor is it less so in the eyes of men. The next is, that they endeavour to furnish their minds with a store of useful observations, for the con-

duct of life, from competent knowledge of the manners and history of the world, a thorough acquaintance with the holy scriptures, a particular and exact study of their husbands' inclinations and interest, and a careful inquiry into the economy and good government of their family; and this, joined to a fund of virtue and good humour, will rightly direct their natural instinct, and make their conversation equally agreeable and useful; will give them new and lovelier charms, when those of youth and beauty are long since wasted and decayed.

And here I cannot but reflect with concern, upon the unhappy methods which have obtained in the world in relation to the education of women. One of the first things that takes possession of their minds, is, the hopes of a husband; but how to become a faithful friend, and an agreeable amiable companion in the married state, are lessons rarely taught, and more rarely learnt. Superficial and showy accomplishments are indeed inculcated with sufficient care; but how to acquire solid worth and useful knowledge makes, for the most part, but a small part of parental solicitude. By this means a woman becomes every thing to a husband, but what she should be; a social friend and an useful assistant. Forgetting that the interest of all men makes that one essential part of the character of a good wife, laid down by Solomon, (Prov. xxxi. 26.) that *she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness*. That is, as she hath acquired habits of prudence and discretion from study and observation, so she hath made it a fixed rule to herself, not to be imperious or presuming upon her knowledge; but rather to make it a reason of constant cheerfulness and good humour, together with a ready, a rational, and an affectionate assistance in every exigency and on every occasion; *in her tongue is the law of kindness*. And surely wisdom, so seasoned and sweetened, is amiable and delightful beyond expression. And therefore this character is crowned by Solomon with that noble encomium, *many daughters have done virtuously but thou excellest them all*. That is, many other women may be as virtuous; but virtue thus recommended, virtue that is

adorned with all the graces of prudence and good-humour, is virtue in its highest and loveliest perfection; *thou excellest them all.* And again, *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* That is, the regard that ariseth from colour and complexion is transient and unsteady; beauty is deceitful; a fair face may cover a deformed mind, and is at best a short and uncertain recommendation; but piety and virtue are sure and lasting perfections, which will always entitle the woman that is blessed with them to eternal veneration and esteem.

But further, a good wife is, in many instances to do yet more than this; she is not only to relieve her husband under his household cares, by the goodness of her humour, and sprightliness of her conversation; but she is likewise to lighten those cares, by dividing them with him, and bearing her part in the burden. And therefore the least that is to be expected from a wife, is, that whilst the husband is busied abroad, or in affairs that call off his attention from the care of his family, that care be supplied by her; and this constitutes the true character of a good wife; at least that part of it which is of principal and most universal use in life.

The care and good economy of a family is a business of a very distinct nature from that of making a provision for the support of it; the care of providing for a family, for the most part, resteth upon the husband; because that is a business of more labour and fatigue than women are ordinarily able to undergo; but then the administration of what is so provided, is the woman's province: thus is the labour of life divided; and if either fail in their proper business, the affairs of the family are in a ruinous way. And upon this is founded that known observation, That a man must ask his wife whether he shall be rich; forasmuch as few men are able to take sufficient care both abroad and at home; and foreign care will be of small use, if the domestic be neglected. And therefore it is, that Solomon, in the character of a good wife, (Prov. xxxi. 11.) tells us, that *the heart of her husband shall safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.* That

is, she will manage his household affairs with so much prudence and fidelity, that her husband shall need no indirect methods of fraud or oppression to support her luxury and extravagance. Again, he tells us, (v. 27.) that *she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.* Indeed he adds many other circumstances of great industry; such as her rising up by night, and plying the spindle and distaff, and providing clothes for her husband and family; but these being circumstances of industry peculiar to a country life, and better adapted to the simpler ages of the world, when trades were not sufficiently settled and distributed into their distinct classes, I think them not necessary to be insisted on in this place.

Now, as the care of the house and family is the immediate and direct duty of the wife, it is evident this duty cannot be discharged, if she be addicted to rambling and going abroad, and do not delight to dwell with her family; and, indeed, a disposition to running abroad, and neglecting the care of her household, is an argument of a light and vain mind; and is made by Solomon, a mark of the most infamous character among women; for, when he describes a vicious woman, in the tire and habit of an harlot, he tells us, *she is loud and stubborn, her feet abide not in her house.* And therefore all women that would be deemed modest and virtuous, should avoid this character of neglecting their husbands and their homes, as a piece of ill conduct, that will lead them into many others; and such as seldom end but in infamy and ruin.

Solomon hath observed, that the ant is a fine emblem and example of industry; and the observations of modern naturalists have made this emblem yet more instructive to us in the distribution of the conjugal care. The male ants, they tell us, are at a certain age furnished with wings, to facilitate their acquisition of food: whereas this advantage is denied the females, inasmuch as their province is the distribution of what is acquired.

Another principal and very important branch of the wife's duty, is the education and care of her children. For the

business of the father being for the most part without doors, and the man being from education and use less fitted for the lower cares that are due to children; having also less leisure to employ that way; having less gaiety to cheer and enliven their humours, and less natural tenderness to relieve all their little wants and afflictions; having, from nature, a stronger propensity to sullenness and silence; and being upon that account less fitted to gratify the eager curiosity of children, in their endless enquiries after every thing that is new or unknown to them; for these reasons, and upon all these accounts, the early education of children rests almost entirely upon the wife; and she is in truth, by nature, much better fitted for it.

And, in order to qualify her for so great a trust, upon which the well being of every family, and consequently of the whole world, doth so greatly depend, it is requisite that her mind be rightly formed, by a thorough acquaintance with the scriptures, and some few useful books of devotion, to humility and meekness; to temperance and diligence; to humanity and charity; and, in one word, to all the virtues of a social and a christian life. And besides all this, it is necessary that she be furnished with a competent knowledge in the employments and accomplishments proper to each condition and age in life, that so she may be capable of directing her children how to employ their time agreeably and usefully, and conduct them gradually to virtue and goodness by her practice, as well as her precepts. And although the mother's principal business be the education and care of her daughters, yet her sons also claim their part of instruction and improvement at her hands; forasmuch as they remain some years entirely under her tuition; and the goodness of their mind and manners depends mainly upon the first impressions they receive; upon the first formation of them to knowledge, and virtue, and piety.

And however mothers may in these ages be thought unequal to such a task, they were not anciently so esteemed of, but were remarkably successful in the education of some of the greatest men of

antiquity. Thus 't is well known, that Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, and Aurelia the mother of Cæsar, had a principal hand in forming those men, who were the glory of their age; and we have yet left an excellent lecture to king Lemuel, (with good reason believed to be Solomon,) which his mother taught him.

Indeed the case is now in a good measure altered, from the present course of education, which (as it respects the better sort) depends mainly upon a knowledge and a mastery in the learned languages, which women do not ordinarily attain to; but then, on the other hand, it ought to be remembered, that virtue and good sense are to be learnt in every language. And forasmuch as morality and religion are now much better understood than they were in the heathen world, the instruction of children, in all the important duties of life, is now a work of much less difficulty than it anciently was.

And that mothers may be the better enabled to go through with this great task of education, it is absolutely necessary, as I before observed, that they be perfectly well acquainted with the holy scriptures, so as to be able to apply all the precepts of them to all the duties in life; to every purpose, and every occasion that shall offer; and also to be well versed in the most useful and approved treatises that have been published upon the subject of education; such as those of Mr. Locke and the Archbishop of Cambray. And this is the true way for all mothers to entitle themselves to that real veneration and sincere esteem from their children, and from their husbands, which completes the glorious character of Solomon's virtuous wife so often mentioned, *Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*

And thus having gone through the several branches of that assistance the wife owes to her husband, in order to make her an useful and agreeable help-met for him, I now proceed to the last instance of duty she owes her husband, to wit, obedience.

Man and woman were at first created perfectly equal. For although there are some passages in St. Paul's epistles which imply a superior dignity in the man, yet

are there none that infer a superior authority, or right of dominion, on his part, before the fall. And indeed, when Adam and Eve were yet in their innocence; when their understandings were clear, and their wills upright; when their interest and inclinations were in all respects the same; and pride and vanity had introduced no competition of superiority between them; there was not the least need of giving either of them power and authority over the other: because the greatest pleasure either of them could be capable of, in that condition, was to do every thing that they knew would be most acceptable to the other; and consequently there was no need of power or command, or force, to oblige either of them to do what either of them desired. But when the woman sinned, through a vain desire of knowledge, and possibly from a vain hope of being superior to her husband, in the only point that gave him pre-eminence over her, it pleased God to punish that vanity in a disappointment of the very end it aimed at; and to make that very desire of pre-eminence a reason of subjection; decreeing, that from thenceforward her desires should be referred to the will and pleasure of her husband, either to reject or comply with them, as he thought fit. As you may read, (Gen. iii. 16.) *And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

And indeed the same desire of pre-eminence, is, for the most part, the cause of their subjection to this day. There are few women of tolerable discretion, that might not entirely preside in their families, or at least be perfectly at ease, under the government of their husbands, if they did not too apparently affect to rule. And this, as it is exceedingly imprudent, and the occasion of almost all the disquiets that distract the married state, so is it, in truth, immoral and irreligious: since they are expressly commanded in the scriptures to submit and be obedient to their husbands; as you may read, (Eph. v. 22, &c.) *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body.* That is, as Christ and the church

make one mystical body, of which Christ is the head; so man and wife make one body, of which the man is the head; and as Christ is the Saviour of the church, so likewise is the husband given to the wife, to be a saviour to her; to maintain, and protect, and defend her, and by his his superior prudence to provide for her well-being; and to conduct her in every instance of discretion and duty. But then, as the head hath no interest of its own, distinct from the rest of the body, nor any advantage over the other parts unless the care of directing and providing for them be deemed an advantage; so hath the husband no true interest separate from the wife, nor any advantage from his superiority, but the care and trouble that attends it. And therefore neither hath he any reason to pride himself upon his power, nor she to repine for her subjection: since a condition of subjection to a wise and good government, is, beyond all question, the happiest condition in life; and a lawless licentiousness would but put us into the power of every passion and every folly, to hurry or seduce us to destruction. And I must insist upon it, that it is in the power of most women, by prudence, gentleness, and sweetness of temper, to make the authority of their husbands a source of ease and happiness to both.

From hence it follows, that, as the authority of the husband is a rational authority, devolved upon him by God, for the direction, and preservation, and well-being of the wife; it should never be exercised but with that view, and that in an humane and rational manner; consequently, blind tyranny, and brutal force should be banished the society of reasonable creatures, and is contradictory to the very nature and end of the marriage union. *So ought men to love their wives,* saith St. Paul, (Eph. v.) *as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.* Dominion was given to man, not for oppression and abuse, but for preservation and protection; on account of his superior wisdom and prudence. Let these then be the reasons and measures of his rule; otherwise he defeats

the ends, of his dominion, and at the same time degrades himself from the dignity of his nature, and declares himself unworthy of the prerogative he is possessed of. And therefore St. Peter (1 Eph. iii.) directs the husband, *to dwell with the wife according to knowledge, giving honour to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.* That is, making that superiority which God hath given you, a reason, not of insolence and abuse, but of humanity, and tenderness, and conjugal affection.

And Plutarch very beautifully to this purpose tells us, that husbands ought to preside over their wives, not with the same despotic power wherewith men dispose of their possessions, but with such a kindly sway as the soul rules the body; sympathizing, and, as it were, growing into one with it; united by all the ties of tenderness and affection. And since the dominion of the man seems to have been originally founded, by the divine appointment, in his superiority of wisdom; if his heart be set upon supporting his authority, his first care should be to support that superiority of wisdom upon which it is best founded. Wisdom is a natural claim to dominion, and wherever that is, authority and rule will wait upon it, especially when kindness and good-nature are added to it; for then it is irresistible: nay, in truth, kindness is oftentimes in itself, more powerful to the attainment of all our desires, than the utmost stretch of power can be. And this is finely illustrated in the fable of the sun and the north wind: a contest arose between these two powers, which of them should soonest oblige a countryman to throw off his loose coat; Boreas began, and storming with all his force, tumbled and tost the coat about the poor man's ears, but to no purpose; for the stronger he blew, the stronger the clown held, and the closer he wrapt his coat about him. When the wind was weary, the sun began, and play'd his cheerful beams upon him so successfully, that he soon melted him down into a kindly warmth, that made his coat not only useless, but troublesome to him: and so he quickly threw it off.

The fable is well known, and the mo-

ral of it obvious and I would earnestly recommend it to all married men and women, to remember, that when storming and raging are ineffectual to gain their ends, kindness and good-nature will seldom or never fail of success.

And thus I have gone through the several duties of the married state.

The duties on the man's part, I told you, were love, fidelity, and support; but, above all, fidelity, forasmuch as infidelity, for the most part, destroys the other two duties, and is the common cause of poverty, as well as contention and hatred. And therefore it is, that Solomon (Prov. v.) advises *to remove far from the strange woman, lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger; and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ears to him that instructed me!* and soon after he adds, *drink waters out of thine own cistern; let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth; let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe; let her breast satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? for the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings; his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself; and he shall be loaden with the cords of his own sins.* Remember the apostle's admonition. Remember, that *as the wife hath no power over her own body, but the husband, so likewise the husband hath no power over his own body, but the wife.* Nay, although your wives had not any power over your bodies, yet would you have no right to abuse and prostitute them to the purposes of vice. *What, know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ? will ye then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What, know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a*

price! Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

On the other hand, let the woman always remember, not only to be faithful to her husband, but agreeable, and observant; not querulous, not contentious; diligent in the care of her family, and the education of her children in the nurture and fear of the Lord; for this is the woman's justest and highest praise, both in the sight of God and man! *Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, and putting on gorgeous apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price: despising the shewy outside of things, the paltry, the perishing vanities of this world, and being clothed upon in their stead, with the silent, the lasting, the invaluable ornaments of modesty, and humility, and piety, which are of eternal excellency! ornaments of irresistible charms, even in the eyes of men, as well as inestimable value in the sight of God.*

And now, my brethren, if ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them. And surely ye would do them, if ye knew your own happiness. Brethren, how good and joyful a thing it is to dwell together in unity! to dwell together in an entire union of affection and interest; and in a perfect harmony both of heart and soul! forbearing one another in love, and keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; well knowing, that ye are tied down to an entire and perfect union, by all the natural engagements, and by all the moral and christian bonds, that can be imagined. And as your temporal interests are one, so also are your eternal. As ye are one body, so likewise are ye of one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ye have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

To whom, in the union of the glorious and ever-blessed Trinity, be all majesty, and power, and praise, for evermore.

SERMON CXIV.

By PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The Duty of Parents to their Children.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

ALL the wise men in the world agree, that the first impressions made upon us, in our tender years, sink the deepest, and last the longest. And therefore Solomon well directeth, that children should be carefully taught, as soon as they are capable of instruction, all those principles and duties which we would desire to have them practise throughout the whole course of their lives. If good precepts and principles are early impressed and fixed, they will be so many lights set up in the minds of children, to direct their conduct through this maze of life; to guide them in the ways of virtue and truth, and in the paths that lead to everlasting happiness. And although the giddiness of youth, and the blind impulse of unruly passions, should sometimes drive them out of their course; yet as soon as this tumult and infatuation is over, and the mind calmed to the dictates of reason, they will again return into the way they should go; and when they are old, they will not depart from it.

From these words, thus explained, I shall make it the business of this, and some following discourses, to lay down the duty of parents to their children, in all its parts; and this I shall endeavour to do, in the illustration and proof of the following propositions:

First, Parents are to take care of the health and constitution of their children.

Secondly, They are to give them good instruction.

Thirdly, They are to correct them in their faults.

Fourthly, They are to shew them good examples.

Fifthly, They are to make a proper provision for them, as far as they are able.

And, lastly, They are to pray to God for them.

First, Parents are to take care of the health and constitution of their children.

And this care should begin earlier, and extend further, than is commonly imagined.

It is a constant care in the culture of trees, to have a strict regard to the goodness and health of the stock you plant from; because such as the stock is, such will the cyon be; and the prudent husbandman exerts the same care, in relation to all the creatures, whose increase he is concerned in; and would count it strange stupidity to breed from beasts that were either diseased or vicious: and with great reason; because such as the sire or dam is, such, in all probability, will the issue be. And, if men be so much, and so justly concerned for the fruits of their trees, and the offspring of their brutes; can it be a question, whether they should be much concerned for their own? especially as it is of far worse consequence to bring a vicious man into the world, than a bad apple, or a vicious horse. And therefore all persons that intend to marry, should take particular care both of their body and their mind, to form both in such a manner, as that neither should be a source of evil to the world; they should, above all things, take care not to become the founders of a vicious and an infected race. For this reason they are to take care to strengthen their bodies by temperance and exercise, and to abstain from all excess in eating and drinking, by which their health and strength may be impaired. And, above all, they are carefully to abstain from that vice, so common and so fatal to youth, for whose punishment God Almighty hath, in signal judgment, appointed so severe and dreadful a distemper; a distemper of such distinguished malignity, and inveterate infection, that it descendeth to late posterity; and is one of the chief, among those remarkable methods, by which God visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.

And as the body is to be disciplined to health and strength by temperance and exercise; so likewise should the mind be disciplined to knowledge and religion.

by proper information and instruction, and by the practice of every virtue. Good habits should be acquired, and vicious habits removed and rooted up, with all possible diligence, before men become parents; that they may not derive the guilt upon themselves, of having filled the world with a race of fiends and monsters: nor the curse upon their posterity of having evil constitutions and evil habits conveyed to them with their very being; such habits as may make them very miserable in this world, and lead them to everlasting misery in the world to come! forasmuch as it is well known, that the dispositions of the mind, like the features of the body, are conveyed down from father to son, and, as the common observation is, run in the blood; and therefore the first duty that parents owe their children, is to convey health, and strength, and a good constitution of body and mind to them, as far as it is in their power so to do, by a proper care of their own health, and a conscientious abstinence from all excess and vice of every kind.

And when that is done, the next care they owe their children, is to provide for their health and strength, by proper nourishment.

The parents are not to think they have done enough, in bringing their children into the world in as good a condition as they could. That, although not the least, is however but the first part of their duty. The next is, to support the good constitution they have brought into the world, by proper nourishment, and care of their health. And to this purpose God Almighty hath impressed a strong instinct of love and tenderness for their young, upon all the creatures. And this love is attended with so much delight and complacency in the tender offspring, as is a natural relief and compensation for all the trouble of education, and even for the pains of travail; agreeable to our blessed Saviour's observation, (John, xvi. 21.) *A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.* And that women may have wherewithal to cherish this joy in their

hearts, and to support these tender objects of their love with delight, God Almighty hath furnished them with breasts, filled with the most proper food in the world, for the nourishment of their young; and hath annexed a very uncommon degree of pleasure to the administration of it, and as uncommon a degree of pain and danger, to the withholding of it from the poor infant; so that this is as plainly a law of nature to all mothers, to suckle their own children, as it is possible to conceive any law to be attended with immediate rewards and punishments, as it is obeyed or transgressed.

As to the rewards that attend the observance of this law of nature, possibly few women that hear me, know any thing of that matter; as having never tried the natural pleasure there is in administering the breast to their own helpless infants; unless perhaps their physicians might, at some time or other, have prescribed it to them for a cure or recovery. But as to the punishment that attends the withholding of that nourishment from their issue, I do not doubt but that most mothers that hear me, may be sufficiently acquainted with it; since it is known, that repelling the milk by art, always occasions fevers, and a variety of other dangerous disorders, which often end in the death, and always in the danger, of the unnatural mothers; and not unfrequently make their lives miserable. And all these evils they endure to avoid the discharge of a delightful duty, which they owe to God, and to their own flesh and blood; and to which they are urged, by an innocent and exquisite natural delight, and by one of the strongest natural instincts in the world; so that we may apply to the women of our age that bitter complaint of Jeremiah, (Lament. iv. 3.) *Even the sea-monsters draw out their breasts, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel like the ostriches in the wilderness.*

This is one of the effects of that false politeness which hath undone the world. How much better would it become us to imitate the simpler manners of those seemingly rude nations, where all women think themselves indispensably obliged to

this duty*, from the highest to the lowest and think themselves sufficiently authorized in doing so, from the example of the brute world around them! It is true, this duty, as it is attended with much pleasure, so it is also attended with a good deal of care and trouble; but then it is so chiefly to the poor, who are forced to undergo it all themselves; and yet these are almost the only people that discharge it; and even these own, that the pleasure of it greatly exceeds the pain; and it is plain it must be so, both from the goodness of God, and the preservation of the creatures, which must otherwise perish. And this is clearly evidenced from the joy and complacence expressed by the poorest creatures, in the performance of it. And the reason of this is evident; the breast is one of the most nervous and delicate textures of our frame, and wonderfully fitted by the Author of our being, for those fine sensations which the soft and tender infant-organs, are as well fitted to produce; the natural consequence of which is, love, joy, and complacence in the instrument of that innocent happiness; and love makes toil not only tolerable, but delightful; and, if women of better condition would but once suffer themselves to be governed in this point, by the dictates of their duty, I am satisfied, that to them it would be doubly delightful! inasmuch as they could easily be relieved by the assistance of servants, from every thing offensive and vexatious in that parental office, and then, nothing would remain in the discharge of it, besides the natural pleasure that attends it: and this, without any regard to the joys of a good conscience, would be abundantly its own reward. Or, say it were not, where is there any duty in life, that is not attended with some uneasiness? and if that could excuse from the discharge of it, there would be no such thing as virtue in the world; merit and demerit, praise and dispraise, would be taken away from the earth! and then idleness and indolence, courage and cow-

* Simpson tells us, in his voyages to the East Indies, that in the Moluques mothers suckle their own children; and dare do no otherwise, not even the queen; alleging the example of beasts, p. 141.

ardice, would be reduced to one value; and temperance and chastity would be placed upon the same level with dissolution and drunkenness. And therefore if women have any regard to the discharge of duty, in a point of so great consequence, both to their own health and happiness, as well as to the health and happiness of their children, and the good of mankind; they are, in the ordinary course of things, indispensably obliged to nurse their own children at their own breasts, if they are fitted so to do, and their health will allow it. And how much more rational and eligible is this, than to expose them (as is now the common practice) to the neglect and cruelty, to the vices and distempers, of mercenary women, who have no regard to them, from any other tie but that of interest! And, forasmuch as they often find their account in the death of the infant, more than in its life and health, there is no question, but the prospect of those perquisites which attend a new nursing, often tempts them to many inhumane methods of getting rid of the incumbrance of one infant, to make way for another they expect more advantage from. And, on the other hand, if they find their account in the life of the present child, (as, God knows, their whole subsistence often depends upon it,) then are they too much tempted, never to let him die: I mean, to impose another upon you, when he doth. And, by this means, the spurious issue of idlers and vagrants, the dregs of stews and brothels, are substituted in the place of your own legitimate offspring, and divide the inheritance with the brethren: or perhaps come single, and alone, into the enjoyment of all that fortune, which you have toiled out your lives to gain; it may be, to the loss of your own souls. And, no question, but this is often the case, when the apparent children of good men, and good women, who have been well principled, and carefully educated, in the fear of God, betray such profligate, perverse, abandoned dispositions, as are no way to be accounted for, upon any natural principles, other than their being the secret issue of other parents, from whom they have derived the hidden seeds of so much villainy and corruption.

To all this may be added another motive of great importance to all mothers; the early engaging the tender affections of their issue in their favour, which is perhaps the best security of their duty. It is well known, that nursing hath a natural tendency, and (if either are not very abandoned) must, in some measure, create a mutual endearment between parents and their children, now too little seen in the world. Children are generally observed to retain an uncommon affection for such nurses as have treated them well, until they are laughed out of it; nor is it altogether without reason, that, in some countries, the being nursed upon the same breast, is thought a natural foundation of relation.

And thus much for the duty of mothers, in providing for the health and strength of their children by proper nourishment. I now proceed to the duty of the father; for neither is he exempt from his portion of the parental care, in this point, since it is equally his concern; and, therefore, as the immediate administration of nourishment is incumbent on the mother, it is the duty of the father to make a sufficient provision for her support in the administration of it; and, by all possible marks and methods of tenderness and good-nature, to relieve, and make her as happy as he can, in this most important article of the conjugal care. And this is no more than what instinct inspirith many of the inferior creatures to do. And, if naturalists rightly inform us, it is to this we chiefly owe all that harmony that fills our fields, and our groves, at the approach of spring; God Almighty having so appointed it, that the toil of incubation should be relieved by sprightly music; that, whilst the hen sits upon the eggs, she should be relieved under that painful and tedious confinement, by the songs of her mate; and where the male is not endowed with a power of relieving her toil in this delightful manner, then we are assured, he divides it with her; and is frequently seen to force her from the nest, that he may succeed to his portion of the trouble.

And, besides all this, where the care of incubation will not suffer the female to take her usual range in search of food,

her mate takes care not only to provide it seasonably for her, but also to administer it in the tenderest manner. And, surely, what instinct inspireth the lower creatures to act, in a point so necessary to their preservation, reason, good-nature, and affection should yet more strongly direct, in beings who boast of higher endowments, and superior excellence.

And thus much for the duty of parents, in providing for the health and good constitution of their children.

SERMON CXV.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The same Subject continued.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

THE next duty that parents owe their children, is, to give them good instruction.

The care of the body, however important, is yet but a lower concern. It is true, as it is the instrument of the soul, care should be taken to make it as usefully subservient to it, in its operations, as is possible. And, forasmuch as this is not to be done without health and a good habit, therefore we owe the same care to the body on these accounts, that a musician doth to his instrument; because if that be neglected, if it be either broken or abused, or if the strings be of an undertone or texture, it will never answer the ends of his art, but will often send forth a disagreeable discord instead of a delightful harmony. For this reason, the first and great care in life should be, to join a sound mind to a sound body; and to preserve both in their perfection. Now, forasmuch as the mind is believed, by many wise men, to come into the world a perfect blank, free from all characters of good or evil, and capable of any; and, forasmuch as knowledge and virtue are its health and strength, therefore the first duty in life is to impress right notions and good principles upon it in the beginning; and for this reason, you are first to im-

press a strong awe of Almighty God upon the minds of your children; of that God who made all things in heaven and in earth, by the word of his mouth, and can destroy them again at his pleasure; of that God who knoweth the secrets of our hearts, and seeth the thoughts afar off; and there is not a motion in our minds that is hid from him, but he will punish all evil thoughts, as well as evil actions, with dreadful vengeance! and, on the contrary, will reward every act and every intention of virtue, with excess of happiness! And when your children know all this, your next care is to teach them, as far as they are capable of learning, what virtue and goodness are; and on the contrary, what those wicked actions are which offend God, and provoke his wrath against us; and then inspire them, by all possible methods, with the love of the one, and the abhorrence of the other. The virtues which they are first to be taught, are, to love, and do all good offices to all around them; to pity the miseries and misfortunes of all they see in affliction, and to be charitable to the poor. And all this most children are capable of learning, even before they can speak; whereas the contrary to this is the practice of most parents, or at least, of those to whose care they commit their children. Wrath, revenge, and cruelty are the first passions children are taught to exert; if they fall, the ground is to be beaten in revenge; if any one offend them, they are taught to stamp and clench their fists, and roar out some expressions, even of inarticulate rage, against them; if birds, or other poor creatures are brought to them, to divert them, they are to be abused and killed. And thus, instead of being early instructed in meekness and compassion, in humanity and good-nature, they are taught resentment, and wrath, and cruelty, in their very cradles. Vices which, in all probability, the best instruction in the world will never be able to unteach them thoroughly, for the rest of their lives; and so they become monsters of oppression and inhumanity to all they deal with.

The sentence of the Areopagus, one of the wisest assemblies of Greece, or of the world, is well worth our attention on this head; they condemned and passed a

severe sentence upon a child, who diverted himself with putting out the eyes of quails; considering that action as a mark of a most detestable disposition, which, if it were suffered to grow up with impunity, would be pernicious to a great number of people.

The next virtue that children are to be taught is, veracity; that is, to tell the truth upon all occasions: and this is a virtue in which they will be more easily instructed, because it is a virtue to which all children are naturally disposed, and from which most of them are warped with difficulty. And to confirm them in this disposition, they are to know, that this is a virtue which God Almighty hath a peculiar regard for; that he delighteth to be called the God of truth; that mercy and truth are his great attributes! that none shall abide in his tabernacle, none shall dwell in his holy hill, but he that speaketh the truth from his heart. On the other hand, they are to be taught the utmost dread and abhorrence of a lie: that the devil is a liar, and the author of it; but that God Almighty hateth and detesteth it; that he hath declared by the mouth of Solomon, that *lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord*; and that *he that speaketh lies shall not escape*. And whereas most lies are told to hide faults, every fault that is confessed with ingenuity, and sorrow for having committed it, should be forgiven; but a lie should never be forgiven, but corrected with double chastisement, and for this plain reason, because it doubles every fault that is committed, by adding known falsehood to it. This, I say, is what children should be taught; but the very contrary to this is too often what they are taught. They are threatened and flattered into falsehood, as soon as they are capable of being guilty of it. And almost the first sentence a child learns, after he can speak, is a lying excuse for his nurse, or his servant. If he fall or be hurt by their negligence, he is to deny it to death. If they have given him any food that makes him sick, he is to deny it stedfastly, although the lie should cost him his life. I believe there are few that hear me, who have not known several, and heard of many more instances of children, who have lost their limbs, and been cripples all their life long,

by this corruption of their attendants. But how many thousands have lost their lives in this manner, is impossible to say. And indeed, if they only lost their limbs and their lives, the evil would be in some degree tolerable; whereas this early habit of lying depraves the mind beyond any other whatsoever! and betrays children into so much impudence and effrontery, as makes them hardened to every virtue, and obstinate in every vice; and of consequence must end, too often, in their eternal ruin.

To this we owe that stedfastness in falsehood, conspicuous in the characters of some men; men that allow themselves in the vilest and most villainous falsehoods, that can any way contribute to increase their gain, or hide their guilt; to mask and disguise their hypocrisy, and raise the reputation of their righteousness! and though they should be instantly detected and exposed even to numerous assemblies, this makes no change in their conduct; for the hypocrite's whole life is one continued lie; you may confute, but you cannot confound him. They receive your correction with such a placid composure, with such a meekness and humility in hypocrisy, that you can scarce believe your senses to their disadvantage; how is it possible such meek, such disinterested, such sanctified men, should be villains? and indeed, it would be hard to account for it, were we not informed by the spirit of God, that the great father of lies can, upon occasion, transform himself into an angel of light.

Another duty which children should be early taught, and which perhaps will be the best guardian of their veracity, and every other virtue, is an awful regard and high veneration for the name and honour of God! for this will establish a high sense of the divine power and majesty in the minds of children, when they understand that his name is not to be mentioned but with awe and reverence. And yet, God knows, the direct contrary to this is the practice of the world; and the very first words children are often taught to pronounce, is some profanation of the name of God, in a curse or an oath.

The fear of the Lord (saith Solomon) *is the beginning of wisdom*: children are influenced into duty by the impressions

of fear, even before the use of reason; and therefore, the fear of God should be inculcated as early and as deeply as possible; as the surest means to inspire them with caution and consideration, which are the sure foundations of wisdom and virtue, and the best guardians against error and impiety; whereas, when children have got early habits of profaning the name of God, they immediately lose all sense of fear towards him; and with that, all sense of religion and virtue! and so become utterly profligate, and abandoned to all vice and villainy! insomuch that I believe, there scarcely ever was one instance of any child, who was early allowed to curse and swear, that ever became a good man, to the last day of his life.

The next virtue in which I would have children instructed, is humility. The virtue which, of all others, will best prepare them for all the cross accidents and calamities they are sure to meet with in life, will give them the truest sense of their own corruption, and weakness, and vanity; and of consequence, will dispose them to contentment and resignation, under all the dispensations and chastisements of the divine providence. And this is a virtue, which the modesty of their tender years will incline and enable them to practise with ease; whereas in the common course of education, they are carefully initiated into the contrary vice, and are taught pride with as much diligence as if it were the most important duty in life, and, as if the delay of so excellent an institution were of dangerous consequence, they take care to begin with it betimes, and instruct them in it as soon as they are capable of discerning their own figure in the glass; and then is the imagination of the poor young creature bewildered with all the gaudies that vanity can invent: laces, ribbons, feathers, fineries, and fopperies of all kinds and colours are crowded together to adorn the tender clay; and the imagination of one, if not both parents, is stretched, to dispose and vary all these to advantage, that the poor little pageant may, by all means, be early taught to set a right value upon its person; and to distinguish itself from other children, whose parents have less fortune or foppety than its own. The consequence

from all this is, that so fine a creature cannot bear to go into a cold dirty school, or mix with a herd of tattered children; and so is kept at home, for fear of spoiling its fine clothes, or its fine complexion. And by this means, its little head is in a very little time so entirely filled with such fine ideas of dress, and fashion, and vanity, that there is no room left for any thing good or useful ever after. If the child be of the other sex, it is odds but she is committed, perhaps trusted entirely to the care of an ignorant and fantastic servant; who, if she hath the good fortune to be born a foreigner, is from that sole advantage, without the recommendation of any one useful talent in life, too often thought qualified to educate children of the highest condition; and will take special care never to spoil the fine eyes of her pupil either with work or reading; never to molest her mind either with the low troublesome knowledge of family affairs, or with the severities of religion and virtue; will teach her to speak a foreign language with great ease and volubility, perhaps without knowing how to read her own; and, what is infinitely worse, will be too apt to unteach her the awkward unfashionable virtues of modesty and reserve; will let her understand, that blushing is the highest crime she can be guilty of; and that she ought to be ashamed of nothing, but being out of countenance, or out of fashion; in a word, will make her a complete, perhaps a perverted woman, before she knows what it is to be a child.

If the child happen to be of the male kind, it is odds, but a French tutor will do as much by him. I would here by no means be understood to mean any reflection upon that great nation, which hath produced so many men of eminence in every branch of useful knowledge. I censure nothing but our own folly, in too often choosing the meanest of that nation for the most important office in life, the education of our children. These are men who, from their skill in outward ornaments, are too often absurdly chosen to infuse inward accomplishments; men who will carry their pupils by a short road through coffee-houses, play-houses and assemblies, into what they call the knowledge of the world; without passing

through the tedious round of old and obsolete books and languages, and the severe discipline of study; and without encumbering their fine heads with the lumber and pedantry of arts and sciences. Such is that detestable education by which many of the best fortunes and families among us are too early corrupted and cramped, to the reproach and calamity of their country! Men well known, and sufficiently distinguished in all places of public resort, except the church, the senate, and the courts of justice; for in the first of these they are rarely seen, at least to any good purpose, and in the rest as rarely heard. And although some, by the force of a better genius, and the influence of the divine grace, may break through the prejudices of so unhappy an education, yet these are but few and rare, in comparison of the mighty numbers that are utterly undone by it.

Another virtue that should be early and carefully taught children, is justice; and that equity and honesty in our dealings, which is prescribed by this virtue, is so very agreeable to the first rudiments of reason, that children are very early capable of it. And to give them a high veneration for this virtue, (which is the shield of right, and the bond of peace,) they are to be taught that it is of high value in the sight of God; that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; and that he hath in his holy word promised great and lasting blessings upon those that practise this virtue from the heart. That God blesseth the habitation of the just; that they are under his immediate care and protection; that he hath promised that no evil shall happen unto them; and that he will deliver them from trouble.

On the other hand, they are to be inspired with the utmost detestation and abhorrence of all fraud and iniquity in their dealings. They are to be taught, that every degree of these vices are marks of the meanest and basest minds! that there is as much villainy in defrauding a school-fellow of a taw or a trifle, as in robbing him of any thing of greater value; for if a child be allowed to do injustice in a trifle, he will be much more tempted to it when he can gain considerably by it. And therefore he is to be

taught, that this is a vice which will render him despicable, as well as hateful, in the eyes of the world; and doubly odious in the sight of God; that false weights and false measures are an abomination to him; that if any man defraud his brother, God hath declared himself an avenger of all such; that he hath declared that neither *thieves nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God*. Your children are to be early and carefully taught, that nothing under heaven can justify any degree of fraud or iniquity in our dealings! that no pretence, even of good intentions or pious purposes whatsoever, can sanctify wicked means; that we must by no means do evil, that good may come; and that the spirit of God hath expressly declared of all that do so, by the mouth of his holy apostle, that their *damnation is just*.

That God himself hath declared by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah (lxi. 8.), *that he hateth robbery, though it were for a burnt offering*. And, above all, they should be carefully taught, that of all robberies, they are the most heinous, the most hateful, the most abhorred of God, who have the spoils of the widow and the orphan for their object. The helpless orphan, the sickly, the aged, the desolated widow: O Lord, righteous and just, how just are thy judgments, which thou hath pronounced against their oppressors in thy holy writ! *Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, nor the poor*, saith Zachariah (vi. 10.) And he observeth of all that do so, that *they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets*. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of Hosts; therefore it came to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled (saith Isaiah, xxxiii. 1.); *and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee*. Rob not the poor (saith Solomon, in the xxiii chapter of his Proverbs, *Rob not the poor*) because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

God, of his infinite mercy, deliver this audience from this guilt, and from the vengeance due to it; through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

SERMON CXVI.

BY PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The same Subject continued.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IN a former discourse upon these words, I proposed to consider the duty of parents to their children, in the following order:

First, That Parents are obliged to take care of the health and constitution of their children.

Secondly, That they are to give them good instruction.

Thirdly, That they are to correct them in their faults.

Fourthly, That they are to shew them good example.

Fifthly, They are to make a proper provision for them, as far as they are able.

And, lastly, They are to pray to God for them.

Under the first of these heads, I shewed it to be the previous duty of all persons that entered into the married state, to take care that their constitutions were not impaired by intemperance, or excess, or vice of any kind; nor their minds infected with evil habits; inasmuch as evil dispositions are found, by experience, to be propagated as well as evil constitutions; and although it be a reflection of sufficient dread and disquiet, to be the author of a miserable infected race of wretched mortals; yet it is infinitely more so, deliberately to diffuse vice and villainy among mankind, and entail them upon late posterity; to be the founder of a race of fiends.

In the next place I shewed it to be the indispensable duty of mothers to nurse their own children, if their health and

constitution will allow it; that this is indisputably a law of nature, and, as such, guarded with evident and sufficient sanctions; the observance of it attended with the reward of signal pleasure and happiness to the parent, and the transgression of it, with dangers and punishments of various kinds.

The next duty of parents, which I considered in my last discourse, was, that of giving their children good instructions; and the first part of this duty, I told you, was to give them early and strong impressions of the awe and veneration of that great Being, that made heaven and earth; that searcheth the secrets of the heart, and seeth the thoughts afar off; the Almighty Author of sure and unerring vengeance to the wicked, and infinite and unspeakable rewards to the righteous! and then, gradually to explain and inculcate the several virtues that will entitle them to his favour; and inspire the utmost abhorrence of those vices that will draw down his vengeance upon them.

The chief of these virtues, I told you, were mercy, humility, truth, and justice; which are the nobler and more immediate transcripts of his own perfections; the great guardians of peace upon earth, and good-will towards men! and, under some of these heads, I shewed you the pernicious practice of parents and servants, in early imitating, and carefully instructing children in many of the contrary vices; wrath, revenge, cruelty, pride, lying, and profaning the name of God, in unhallowed oaths and curses.

I concluded with an earnest exhortation to parents, early and carefully to instruct and exercise their children in the principles and in the practice of justice, which is the shield of right, and the bond of peace: to teach them that nothing under heaven can justify any fraud or iniquity in our dealings, that no pretence of good intentions, or pious purposes, whatsoever, can sanctify wicked means.

Having thus considered the principal virtues in which children are early to be instructed, I now proceed to consider those, which may, I think, be properly called secondary or ministerial virtues, as being subservient to virtues of greater consequence, and higher excellence than themselves; and the chief of these are

temperance, obedience, modesty, civility, and industry.

As to the first of these, I am well aware that temperance is, and hath ever been, accounted a cardinal virtue; nor is it any part of my intention to debase its dignity; but only to observe, that as it is subservient to higher purposes than bare abstinence from excess; and is indeed necessary to the exercise of every other virtue; therefore I think it may not improperly be termed ministerial; and it is certain, that wise men have ever esteemed temperance so necessary both to health and virtue, that some have gone so far as to enjoin it strictly to the breeding parent; that so the child may come into the world in some measure influenced by this habit, or at least, properly prepared for it. All physicians agree, that the plainest and simplest foods are best fitted to young and tender stomachs, and are attended with less danger of surfeit and excess, and of consequence are more safe and salutary; and all philosophers agree, that temperance is the truest foundation of every virtue and good habit in the mind; and if so, it is evident to common sense, that this foundation cannot be laid too early; and therefore parents cannot be too careful in avoiding all sweetenings and seasonings, all heightenings of taste in their children's food, which cannot fail of having ill effects upon their health, and giving them an early turn to luxury, the inlet of every vice, and every corruption, to which the human nature is prone! luxury, our national reproach and ruin! to which we owe, among infinite other evils, the immeasurable use of that too fashionable and pernicious plant which weakens the stomach, unbraces the nerves, and drains the very vitals of our national wealth; to which nevertheless our children are as early, and as carefully enured, from the very breast, as if the daily use of this liquor were an indispensable duty which they owed to God and their country.

The next ministerial virtue which children should be early taught, is obedience; and it is sufficiently known, that this is always the first duty inculcated by that order of men, which hath hitherto been most eminent for the education of youth. *Children, obey your Parents in all*

things, saith the apostle: *for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* And doubtless, nothing can be more agreeable to the God of order, and fountain of all virtue, and all felicity, than this submission of children to their natural superiors and guardians; which is the best early guardian of their health, the best security of their virtue, and source of their happiness; it being evident, that in the ordinary course of things, nothing can be more reasonable, or of greater use to children, than a ready undisputing submission to the will of their parents: they being, from the advantage of more age and experience, better judges of what they ought to do or avoid. And therefore this obedience should have no limitation or reserve, except where the parent is found to command something contrary to the law of God; in that case, and in that only, the child's obedience is to be dispensed with; in all others to be steadily and uniformly exacted, without admitting the least debate or hesitation; than which nothing can be of worse consequence, either to the peace of the parent, or the virtue and well-being of the child; the same spirit that is restive to the authority of the parent, will in time be refractory to that of the magistrate, and rebellious even to that of Almighty God; and will at the same time, in all probability, degenerate into an offensive rudeness, or an unsociable sullenness to the rest of the world. And therefore parents should subdue this spirit early and effectually, if they expect their children should become good sons, good subjects, or good Christians. And the true way to do this is, by carefully avoiding all cruel, unjust, and wicked commands, and exacting a severe and steady obedience to all others. And these, in a prudent and good parent, must often be such as will shew the child his own interest and happiness, in the obedience he yielded to them; although neither of these, neither his interest nor his happiness, should ever by any means be made the rules or measures of his obedience (because there are infinite instances, in which it is impossible he can either discern or judge of them); no, this must be entirely resolved into the parent's right of rule; the natural pleasure of a dutiful submission to their authority;

and the comfortable assurance of a blessing from Almighty God, upon their cheerful and conscientious obedience.*

Another virtue that parents are carefully to cultivate in their children, is modesty. By modesty I mean, not that outward demureness and artifice of face; that affected guise and phrase of humility, which impudence often assumes, and hypocrisy always: the mask of fraud, and harbinger of deceit! that meek unblushing assurance, which distinguishes the smooth and saintly Pharisee; that smooths his phrase, and humbles his eyes, with all the arts, and to all the purposes of delusion; of whom the Psalmist so justly observes, that *there is no faithfulness in his mouth; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue*. No; true modesty arises from a true sense of decency and duty, and best shews itself in a becomingness of behaviour, and due deference to the rest of the world, according to their several relations and stations in it; equally removed from fawning and from falshood: and of this we need say little more, than that it is at once the greatest ornament of youth, and best guardian of virtue. It is that natural check, which it hath pleased God to lay upon every thing, that is either vicious, or unruly, or even indecent in our nature. And of how much value this virtue is in the eyes of Almighty God, is evident from the care which he hath taken of it in the very formation of our frame. The flushing of the blood in the face, upon the consciousness of having violated this virtue, or even upon the least apprehension of being in danger of violating it, is one of the most amazing phenomena among all the wonders of our make: for what is this, in effect, but God Almighty's declaring to us, that we shall never offend against this virtue, without publishing our shame to all around us? what is it, but making every drop of blood in our bodies the guardians of it? and this in a manner, equally astonishing and inexplicable! flushing the blood into the face, by channels that never were found out; and by a power that never was or will

be accounted for: and the plain reason why this virtue is so guarded, is of such mighty importance in the sight of God, is this; it is the guardian of every virtue; it is in the mechanism of our frame, what prudence is in our minds, the power that sways, and guides, and governs, all the other virtues. Take away prudence from the mind, and there is no virtue left: take away modesty from our make, and the consequence will, in effect, be the same: this once removed, the mind becomes the easy prey of every passion, every vice, and every evil tendency in our nature. This once removed, every spark of evil, before latent in the soul, blazes out into a flame, and devours all worth and virtue before it: and therefore there is not a more lovely, or more important, office of the parental care, than to be strict and diligent guardians of the modesty of their children; than to keep them at the utmost distance from every thing that hath the least appearance even of indecency, and much more of impudence, impiety, or immorality of any kind. And yet the very contrary to this is too notoriously the practice of many parents; who take a monstrous, or, to speak more properly, a hellish pleasure, in teaching their children the worst words, and most vicious and impudent forms of speech, as soon as they are able to speak.—*Folly* (saith Solomon) *is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom*: and is it possible there can be a greater excess of folly, than for parents thus to delight in the destruction of their own children? This is so shocking a conduct, that it is incapable of aggravation: and therefore I shall only observe of it, that these men act as if they were afraid their children's own natural inclinations, their parents' example, and the corruptions of the world, would all come too late to make them reprobates! to make them ripe for perdition! and therefore they take early pains to establish their guilt, and to insure their damnation betimes.

Another duty parents owe their children is, to teach them that civility, which is commonly known by the name of good manners—an accomplishment which introduces youth more early, and to more advantage, into the world, than any other whatsoever; and oftentimes recommends

* On the slave-coast of Guinea, children give and receive nothing from their parents, or elder brothers; nor wives from their husbands, but upon the knee.—*Bosman*, p. 341.

them more effectually to the favour and protection of the great, than many other qualities of more inherent excellence; because it is often the only one by which they can be obliged or served. In one word, it is an easy, a natural, and an universal introduction to the regard of mankind; and if it be supported by real worth, cannot fail to fix us in their esteem.

And this civility, which we call good manners, is a duty founded at once, both in justice and necessity.

No man is self-sufficient, but hath frequent and endless occasions for the assistance and good offices of others; and no man is so strictly tied down by any law either of God or society, to do good offices to others to the full extent of his power, but that he hath at the same time a right to some returns of gratitude and acknowledgment. And in this conduct, in requesting the favours and good offices of others with a becoming deference; in a readiness and cheerfulness to do good offices to others, with a thankfulness for being so employed; and, lastly, in a thankful and ready acknowledgment of all good offices done to ourselves; in these consist the essentials of civility, and what we truly and properly call good manners: the courtly phrase, the courtesy, and the bow, and the friendly salutation, are but its outward garb, indication, and ornament. Let me be understood upon this point, which is, in truth, very little understood in the world. Although every man hath a right, from our natural equality, to a fair unoffending treatment from every other, yet no man hath an absolute right to the aid of others in any exigency; and therefore, when he wants it, he is obliged to sue for it, in a modest phrase, and submissive demeanour; and when he hath received it, he is to return thanks, in a style suitable to the favour received; and, therefore, the man that is void of good manners, is at the same time void both of gratitude and justice; he expects what he hath not a right to; and he pays not what he owes. So that ill-manners is in truth a lower kind of immorality; it is injustice and dishonesty in a less degree; and, if it be neglected there, may soon rise, and become conspicuous in a higher.

Another virtue in which children are to be carefully instructed, and to which they are to be early inured, is patience (which I shall beg leave to consider in this place as a ministerial virtue). Now patience is a virtue, which teaches us to bear evil with equanimity, and humble resignation to the will of God: by whom all events are governed, and without whom not so much as a sparrow falleth to the earth. Forasmuch then as it is well known, that all evils are increased by impatience, and abated by equanimity and resignation; therefore it is obvious at first sight, of what importance the value of patience must be, in a world encompassed with evil.

The instances under which this virtue is to be exercised are endless as the calamities of life; and therefore it cannot be too early, too often, or too earnestly inculcated. However, I shall at present content myself with recommending one small part of it to the consideration of all parents and tutors; and that is patience of solitude: early to habituate their children and pupils to bear being alone.

The advantages of this habit are obvious, and need barely to be mentioned. First they will by this means learn to think, to reflect, and converse with their own thoughts and hearts. Secondly, they will soon get the better of those instinctive fears of solitude, which, however wisely impressed, (in aid of that period of life which most needs the protection and care of others,) are too apt to degenerate into timorous superstitions; which impair all the powers of reason, and often make life a load. And, thirdly, it will guard them from those infinite evils which men daily run into, to banish solitude, and kill time; such as evil conversation, and idle pursuits and habits of all kinds. And this, we are told, a wise man of antiquity laid so great a stress upon, that, being asked, what he had gained by his philosophy? he answered that he had learned to converse at home, and not be beholden to others for good company.

Another duty in which children are early to be instructed and exercised, is industry in some honest and useful occupation; the children of poor parents, in some rudiments or lower branch of some

useful trade, as the foundation of a future livelihood; and the children of those of better condition, in endowing and adorning their minds with those habits of knowledge and virtue, which will best become their station and condition in the world, and make them a blessing to all below them.

"The whole life (say the Chinese philosophers) depends upon care and industry; the year on the spring; the day on rising early. He who in his youth is not diligent and assiduous in his studies, when old age cometh, will be a fool, and find himself empty-handed; he who in spring will not till, in autumn will not reap."

Early industry is the best security in the world against vicious habits: when this is neglected, men easily become a prey to sloth and idleness; which are the parents of every vice, and the bane of every thing good and excellent.

And here I cannot but take notice of that noble institution of Solon, that great Athenian law-giver, which decreed, that every child that refused or neglected to support his parents, when age or infirmities called for their assistance, should be branded with infamy, and deprived of all the privileges of society; but with this limitation, provided the parents took care to breed up their child to some useful trade or occupation; which if they neglected, their children were then acquitted of all obligation to provide for them in their need.

And thus I have done with that part of the parents' duty, which consists in instructing their children, and forming them to those virtues which may be called the lesser morals, but are at the same time the sure guardians of the greater.

SERMON CXVII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The same Subject continued.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

HAVING, in some former discourses, laid before you the several parts of the parents' duty to the children, and explained very particularly the several virtues, both primary and ministerial, in which they were to be early instructed and exercised; I now proceed to consider the means necessary to be made use of, in order more effectually to inculcate and confirm those virtues in their hearts.

And, first, all parents are particularly to remember, that as soon as their children have passed through the first rudiments of learning, and are able to read, they should then be carefully taught some short system of the Christian religion, such as that excellent summary of Christian doctrines and duties contained in the Church Catechism; not only to get them by heart, or rather by rote, as the common custom is; but in a rational intelligent way; and, in order to this, the questions and answers should be varied and explained, and the children should be obliged to give the meaning of them in other words; and, at last, to add the proofs from scripture. And this they will be enabled to do, by the help of some short and useful explanation of the catechism, published for that purpose; one particularly, by a late most reverend and excellent prelate, formerly your teacher in this place; but, above all, the scriptures are to be read frequently and constantly; those parts especially and primarily, which contain an account of the wonderful works and judgments of God; such as the creation, the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; and above all, the life and miracles of our Blessed Saviour, and his apostles. For these being in their own nature extraordinary, and at the same time conveyed to us in

the noblest, the most instructive, and the most delightful relations this world was ever blessed with, will be read with pleasure, and remembered with ease; and will at the same time give your children strong and awful notions of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God; together with a deep veneration of his justice and judgments upon presumptuous and impenitent sinners: and, in consequence of this, will impress a strong awe and dread of offending and provoking the divine wrath and indignation against us.

After this, they are carefully to peruse and revolve those solemn and devotional parts of the holy scriptures, which set forth, in most moving and exalted strains the mercy, and might, and majesty of Almighty God; such as the psalms of David, the prophecies of Isaiah, and the life, suffering, and submission of Job: and, lastly, they are to be well and often instructed and exercised in the Ecclesiastes, and proverbs of Solomon, which contain at once the plainest and the wisest precepts that ever were delivered for the conduct of life, both with regard to this world, and the world to come. These are to be perpetually perused, and perfectly remembered; and by being so, will be a sure and lasting fund of direction, consolation, and support, on all occasions, and throughout all emergencies in life.

And thus I have gone through those fundamental duties of erudition and instruction, which parents owe their children. For the rest, this city hath the advantage of so many excellent schools for their further improvement, makes it unnecessary to pursue this subject any longer. Only thus much give me leave to observe to you, that as good school-masters are the greatest benefactors to mankind, and the worst rewarded for the good they do, of all mortals; paying an uncommon regard and return to them, for the advantages your children receive from them, as it is your duty, so it is likewise greatly your interest; and the fruits of it will be repaid sevenfold into your own bosom.

I have now considered at large, how your children are to be ~~and~~ gradually

through the whole series of Christian and moral duties; and have only to add, that, when they are early and long practised in them, the motions of duty and virtue will then become as easy and as familiar to them, as those of nature: or, to speak more properly, custom will make them nature; and they will practise them with as little difficulty, as they walk or breathe.

The next duty that parents owe their children is, to correct them in their faults. And this is a duty wherein parents, from their great fondness for their children, are often exceedingly faulty: and yet, in truth, the neglect of correction is faulty, even upon the score of fondness; for true tenderness and love to children should oblige parents to provide early and carefully, that they might be miserable and afflicted as short and as seldom, and happy as often and as long as possible. And the true way to effect this, is to fix good habits; and either to prevent or to root out evil habits as early as possible. For this reason, if children are not to be won to goodness by kindness and indulgence, (which I own is much more desirable,) they are to be compelled to it by severity and discipline; and when they have once got a good habit, it will, from that moment, be easy to them. On the other hand, if they are not to be kept back from evil by exhortation and advice, they are to be deterred from it by threats and punishments; for, as naturalists observe of young trees, that stubborn, crooked plants are not to be straightened but by fire; so stubborn, perverse dispositions are often not to be amended but by warm and severe correction; and that from the very beginning. One correction, and that perhaps a light one, will deter a child from doing an ill thing at first; but, if you suffer him to get a habit of doing it, perhaps twenty corrections will not break him of it: so that children are to be early corrected, out of pity and tenderness. For what parent, that loves his child, would not rather correct him for a fault once, than let him go on until he found himself under a necessity of correcting him fifty times for it, and perhaps to no purpose? And therefore Solomon

rightly observes, (Prov. xii. 24.) that *he that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him be- times.* From hence we learn, that pa- rents should correct their children early, even out of love and pity to them. And the same wise man again adviseth, (Prov. xix. 18.) *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* That is, chasten him early, while there is hope of his reformation; for if you let him go on in vice, your correction may come too late. Again he tell us, (Prov. xxix. 15.) *The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.* The mo- ther is here particularly mentioned, be- cause children are mostly ruined by the false and ill-judged indulgence of the mothers: nay, you ought to correct your children early, as well for your own ease, as for their amendment: for be- sides the pleasure of seeing your children grow up in goodness and virtue; is it not a great happiness to yourselves to be saved the trouble, and vexation, and disquiet, of giving your children frequent and re- peated corrections, when they are grown headstrong in vice? And therefore Solo- mon again most excellently adviseth, (ver. 17. of the same chapter,) *Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*

But, perhaps, the child is weak and sickly, and therefore must not be cor- rected, for fear of spoiling his constitu- tion. This is the common excuse for ruining all the children in the world; and it is as shameful and ill-grounded, as it is common: for the sure way of destroy- ing the best constitution under heaven, is by leaving it at the mercy of peevish and ungovernable dispositions; by making it a prey to all the unruly passions, and hu- mours, and appetites of a perverse mind: and therefore the only way to preserve a weak constitution, is by subduing the froward unruly mind, that tears it to pieces, to the discipline of reason and virtue. Moreover, it should be consi- dered, that if this be not seasonably and effectually done, the diseases and ail- ments of headstrong children can neither have the aid of proper food or proper physic to relieve them; and therefore all necessary correction is to be early ap-

plied, even for the interest of their health and quiet: although, in truth, if correc- tion were dangerous to such a constitu- tion, it were infinitely better, that a per- verse child should actually die under it, than that he should be suffered to become a son of perdition: to grow up into a monster of vice and iniquity, to plague his parents and the world, and to gather to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

The next duty that parents owe their children, is to set them good example; of which I shall now say no more than this, that your children will always be- lieve, that you think that to be the best which you practise yourselves; because you do it of choice; and if you did not think it best, why should you do it? and therefore, as it will be cruel in you to correct them for those vices which you yourselves not only teach, but tempt them to, by your example; so it will be vain, and impossible for you to reform them by it. For this reason, if you have any regard for their well-being in this world, and their salvation in the next, you will be infinitely careful not to lead them in the paths of perdition; not to guide or go before them in the ways of sin, which go down to the chambers of death.

The next duty that parents owe their children, is to make a proper provision for them, as far as they are able; and the Apostle tell us, (1 Tim. v. 8.) that *he is worse than an infidel, that neglecteth this duty.* And the reason of this decla- ration is evident: this is a duty which even the heathens thought themselves obliged to from the laws of nature; and therefore that Christian that neglects it, is, in that respect, worse than a heathen.

Now by making provision for your children must be understood, such a pro- vision as may enable them, by the help of an honest industry, to become good and useful men in the world; for what can be a more lamentable consideration to parents, than to reflect, that by their idleness and extravagance, they have ex- posed their helpless issue to misery and contempt, and to all the temptations of poverty and want? But, on the other hand, parents are by no means obliged

to provide endlessly for their children, as many of them do : to heap up so much wealth, as may make it needless for their children to be either virtuous or industrious, in order to get a comfortable livelihood, is surely a dangerous provision, and such as never can be a duty. And, certainly, much less are they obliged to provide such fortunes for them as may tempt them to luxury and excess, to vanity and extravagance ; because that is providing, not for their support, but for their ruin, both of body and soul.

There is one thing I must recommend to parents, as a point of great importance, to their own as well as to their children's happiness ; and that is, in regard to their settling them in the world, in marriage. Many unhappy marriages are laid to the charge of parents, and, I fear, with too much truth. A discreet parent thinks himself obliged to settle his child advantageously ; but that is the point wherein they so often fail ; for, by advantageously, they generally understand, richly and honourably : whereas riches and high rank easily may, and often do, bring many miseries along with them. There ought to be a strict examination of the heart, on such occasions, whether they can appeal to the All-seeing eye for the integrity of their intentions, and whether avarice or ambition may not be more the motives of their conduct than a reasonable prospect of happiness to their issue : for if any degree of these mix with their intentions, it will taint them before God ; and naturally tends to the mutual misery both of the parent and of the child.

Many things ought to be carefully considered, before such an union is completed. And as perfect obedience is required of the children, parents should be very cautious in their commands ; and impose nothing upon them (particularly in relation to marriage) but with a proper regard to their true interest and happiness ; which is not possible to be attained in the conjugal state, without true worth and virtue in the associate ; which are not always the attendants of wealth and honour. And even where these excellencies are attended with those temporal advantages, the parents' choice is to

be urged with the utmost tenderness and indulgence ; inasmuch as there may be latent and well-grounded dislikes, which (too often) children can neither conquer nor explain.

When this is done, then, whatever may happen from the parent's misapprehension of things, they will have a clear conscience, and no room to reproach themselves : nor can they justly be reproached.

There are some parents such tyrants, that all the world must condemn them. I do not speak to them, for I fear they are incorrigible, and I hope their number is small ; but I address myself to those who appear more reasonable ; but although they act with less appearance of violence, may be as guilty ; and by insinuations and artful address prevail over fearful and modest minds, and obtain a consent, when they have not courage or assurance enough to resist or contend on such an occasion. This has been the unhappy case of many a young woman ; and is, in effect, as cruel a case as can be well imagined ; inasmuch as it frequently turns the humble and dutiful disposition of children into their destruction.

The last duty that parents owe their children, is to pray to God for them ; forasmuch as without the assistance and protection of the Divine Providence, all your endeavours for the well-being of your children, will be ineffectual, and all your counsels vain. You may inculcate the best precepts with the utmost care and diligence ; but you will never do it to effect, without the assistance of the Divine Grace : *Paul may plant, and Apollos water ; but it is God who giveth the increase.* You may take as much pains as you will to establish your family ; but remember always, that *except the Lord buildeth the house, their labour is in vain that build it.* Therefore you are to pray earnestly, humbly, and incessantly to Almighty God : to that God *who giveth wisdom to the simple, that he would inform the understandings, and direct the hearts of your children in the ways of his laws, and the works of his commandments :* that he would remove far from them vanity and lies ; that he would make them a clean heart, and re-

new a right spirit within them: that he would inspire them with charity and mercy, with truth and justice, with humility and meekness, with honesty, industry, and sincerity in all their dealings: that your sons may grow up as the young plants, strong and upright, and fitted for the noblest works of the architect: and, and that your daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple, at once both ornaments and supports to the church of God; that your children may grow up good Christians, good wives, good husbands, good parents, good friends; that after the example of their blessed Lord and Redeemer, they may grow up in wisdom, as in years, and in favour with God and man: that they may go on from strength to strength, useful citizens to their country, subjects to their sovereign, and servants to their God; guardians of religion and virtue of every kind to all around them, until they are gradually fitted and finished into living temples of the Holy Ghost; the present pillars and ornaments of the earth, and future inhabitants of heaven.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

SERMON CXVIII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The Duty of Children to their Parents.

EXOD. XX. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

ALL the precepts of religion respect either our duty to God, to our neighbour, or to ourselves; that is, the duties we owe to God, as creatures of his goodness, and dependants upon his providence; the duties we owe to mankind in the several relations of life; and the duties we owe to ourselves, in order to make us answer the ends of our being, and enable us to discharge the duties we owe to God and to one another; conse-

quently, the duties we owe to ourselves are but secondary and subservient to those; and therefore our Blessed Saviour, being asked by the learned Pharisee, Which was the great commandment in the law? he answered, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Now the law of God considers mankind as members of one great community; and therefore every member of this community is our neighbour; that is, one to whom we owe all the duties of a social creature, all the offices of humanity. But, forasmuch as the duties of this general tie were not sufficient to answer all the engagements and ends of life; therefore it hath pleased God to superadd to these, particular engagements and obligations, absolutely necessary to the order and well-being of society: and of these, the duty of children to parents hath justly obtained the first place; because all our other duties to mankind begin and are founded here. It is from a right deference to the authority and institutions of parents that we learn to become good men, good neighbours, good friends, and good subjects, as well as good sons. In one word, it is here we ordinarily learn all the offices of a social and rational creature, in our whole commerce with mankind: and therefore it is, that God in his great wisdom, when he had prescribed the duties relating to himself, in the decalogue, immediately subjoins that which respects our parents, *Honour thy father and mother, &c.*

And this is agreeable to the very order of nature, forasmuch as parents are, next to God, the authors of our being, God indeed is properly our father, and earthly parents do but convey to us that being which God produces; but the consequence from this is, that although we owe more absolute and unlimited obedience to God, the fountain of our existence, yet we are to honour our parents, as his substitutes upon earth.

But forasmuch as this duty is not founded barely upon our existence, but is deduced with more force and greater evidence, from the advantages of early

support, and early institution, derived to us by the care and affection of our parents; therefore all those that are to us in the place of parents, and in that relation eminently contribute to our well-being, have the fullest and clearest claim to paternal honour. And such are, among others, *our teachers and spiritual pastors*; from your parents you derive your being; from these, your well-being. From God you derive your immortal soul, with all its excellent faculties; from these you derive, under God, all that cultivation and improvement in virtue and knowledge, which are the glory even of immortal spirits.

In the next place, your governors are to you in the place of parents, because they are the fathers of their country; and the well-being of the community hath the same dependance upon their paternal care and vigilance, that particular houses have upon the prudence and affection of the masters of families. And indeed all government, as it is originally derived from paternal authority, is in truth no otherwise to be considered than as an enlargement of that authority; so that magistrates, succeeding into the place and office of parents, are to be regarded as public fathers, on whom the power of life and death, originally vested in parents, is now devolved. And as this is agreeable to the scripture-account of the origin of nations in general, divines have observed, that it seems to be more particularly evidenced in the common and successive name of the kings of the Philistines, Abimelech; which is a compound of two Hebrew words, Abi-Melech, my father the king; plainly shewing, that the title of king was only an appellation of honour, originally given to the father of the family.

Having thus shewn who they are to whom we are to pay honour and obedience, from the obligation of this precept, I proceed, in the next place, to explain the first branch of this duty enjoined in my text; namely, the duty of children to their parents.

First then, we are to honour our natural parents, or those whom the providence of God, or the constitution of our country, have substituted into their place. And this we are to do in the following

instances: first, in reverence; secondly, in obedience; and, thirdly, in a grateful retribution of all the benefits we have received from them.

First, I say, we are to honour our parents by reverencing them. Now, reverence is an awful love, mixed with a fear of offending, which arises from respect and duty: not such a slavish dread as drives from the presence of those in authority over us, but such a filial and affectionate awe as fills us with veneration and esteem, and will engage us to attend to the monitions, and conform to the conduct, of our parents; and, at the same time, to abstain religiously from every thing that might give them the least trouble or disquiet. And this inward veneration is wont to shew itself both in our words and whole demeanour. First, in our words; for, these, as they flow from a mind tenderly and dutifully affected, will naturally carry with them all the indications of veneration and affection that sounds can express; and will, at the same time, be submissive and few. Respect is a natural restraint upon us, which, from fear of giving offence, ties up the tongue from uttering any impropriety or indecency to our parents, even when we are obliged to reason and remonstrate against their conduct. Such is that earnest intercession of Jonathan to his father Saul, for the life of David his friend—his friend that was as his own soul: (1 Sam. ch. xix.) *Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works to thee-ward have been very good.* Nay, we have an instance of an undutiful son in the gospel, who, although he did not obey the authority of her father, did not, however, dare to profess his disobedience; but, on the contrary, gave him good words, and a dutiful appellation, saying, *I go, Sir*, although he went not. And, certainly, the tribute of respectful language is the least that can be paid to those who have taught us to speak; and therefore the rude returns of wicked children to their parents are so detestable in the sight of God, that he hath in his law denounced a punishment against this crime, equal to that of blasphemy against himself. *He that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put*

to death. (Exod. xxi. 17.) And (Prov. xx. 20.) *He that curseth his father or mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.*

Again, the inward veneration due to parents is wont to shew itself in our whole demeanour. The humility of the mind naturally expresses itself, as in modesty of speech, so likewise in lowliness and submission of gesture; bowing the head, and bending the knee, upon every proper occasion.

An extraordinary instance of this is to be found in the demeanour of Joseph to his father. (Gen. xlviii. 12.) Highly exalted as he was in the court of the greatest monarch upon earth, he thought it no lessening to bend before his aged father, and pay him all the marks of submission and duty; nay, and he did this at a time when, the text assures us, *Jacob's eyes were dim*, and could not see; and consequently, when he could not be upbraided by his father for want of due respect, and probably would not have been blamed by any other mortal: for who would have been so vain as to censure the conduct of one who was at that moment in the highest reputation for wisdom and prudence of all mortals then alive? or, if their vanity could have carried them to censure his conduct, their fear of Pharaoh's first minister would certainly have obliged them to keep their thoughts to themselves. Yet, under all these circumstances of his father's blindness, his own exalted station, unrivalled wisdom, and uncontrouled power, Joseph's affectionate and dutiful heart would not suffer him to dispense with the least form of respect and veneration to his aged parent: for we read, that when he brought his sons from between his knees, to present them to his father, *he bowed himself with his face to the earth.* And surely there is not any one circumstance of his grandeur that reflects half so much lustre upon his character as this single instance of filial humiliation. When I consider him upon his knees to God, I regard him as a poor mortal, in the discharge of duty to his Creator, of adorable majesty and infinite height above him. When I behold him bowing down to Pharaoh, I consider him in the dutiful posture of a subject to his prince,

to whom he was indebted for the highest exaltation and honour. But when I see him bending to the earth, before a poor, old, blind, decrepid father, I behold him with admiration and delight: how ~~does~~ that humiliation exalt him! A father, to whom he was so far from being indebted for a great fortune, or an honourable support, that, on the contrary, his father was obliged to him, as far as a father could be, upon both these accounts. He had no estate to settle, at least none worth Joseph's regard; nor had his son any inheritance to hope for from him, but his blessing; and that he thought he ought not to receive but in the lowest posture of humiliation and reverence. A demeanour, God knows, very distant from the principles and practice of the present age, who have no notion that any thing can be meant by a parent's blessing, but some mark of their bounty, or settlement of their fortune; and for this reason the best of parents are regarded as little better than an incumbrance upon the son's estate, and a bar to his happiness: and therefore it is no wonder if they are treated with no more respect than is absolutely necessary to secure the inheritance; I mean, so much of it as the wisdom of their ancestors hath left unsettled; otherwise, it is much to be feared, that rudeness and neglect would, (and in fact they do,) for the most part, fill up the place of reverence.

And this want of duty to parents is the effect of another and much greater want, the want of good principles, the want of a right sense of religion, and knowledge of the scriptures: for surely, if men were acquainted with the terrors of the Lord denounced against undutiful children, they could never allow themselves in the least instance of disobedience or disrespect to their parents. *The eye that mocketh at his father, saith Solomon, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.* And as this is often literally true in the calamitous end of abandoned children, whose carcasses are, in the field of battle, whither their disobedience carried them, exposed to ravens, and vultures, and other birds of prey: or else upon gillows and gibbets, to which their villainies

have brought them; villainies committed in contempt of the menitions and exhortations of their parents! the same sad fate is also frequently fulfilled upon undutiful children, in a metaphorical sense, in the deplorable ruin, and actual loss of eyes, brought upon such wretches by other nooks and vermin; by creatures of much greater prey, and surer destruction, than the ravens of the valley and the young eagles put together.

I have often admired it as a glorious instance of discipline in the Jewish commonwealth, that an undutiful child was to be stoned to death by the people: that so every one should be obliged to punish a crime which every one was obliged to abhor. But then it must be observed, that the parents had no right to bring the child before the magistrate, in order to this public condemnation, before they had first privately chastised him: for that was the letter of the law, (Deut. xxi. 18.) *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother; and when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then it was that he was to be brought before the magistrate, accused, condemned, and stoned to death: so that private chastisement was always to go before that public, that infamous, that dreadful execution.*

This, my brethren, was the appointment and law of God, to his own people the Jews; and was, without question, the wisest institution that ever obtained in any nation; as it is the noblest monument of that wisdom and virtue, by which the Chinese think themselves distinguished above the rest of the world, at this day! the mighty veneration to parents enjoined by their laws, and the severe and exemplary punishment of undutifulness and disobedience. In China, if a father charges his son with any crime before a magistrate, there needs no other proof; he is immediately condemned. If a son should presume to mock a parent, or lay violent hands upon him, the whole country is alarmed, and the judgment reserved for the emperor himself: the magistrates of the place are turned out; and all the neighbourhood threatened, as having given countenance

to so infernal a temper, which must be supposed to have discovered itself upon other occasions; it is impossible, they think, it should have arrived to such a degree of villainy at once. The criminal, in these cases, is sentenced to be cut into ten thousand pieces, and afterwards burnt! his houses and lands destroyed, and even the houses that stood near him; to remain as monuments of so detested a crime; or rather, that all remembrance of so abominable a villainy should be effaced from the earth. Nor are even their emperors, in all their height of power, exempted from the strictest discharge of duty and piety to their parents.

But, further, as we must honour our parents with all the marks of outward reverence; so likewise with all the real effects of sincere obedience. — *Children*, saith the apostle, (Coloss. iii. 20.) *obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* And as this is founded in the law of God, it is also enjoined by the dictates of reason; forasmuch as parents are our natural superiors; and because they are better judges and directors of your conduct, from the advantage of more years and experience, than you can possibly be for yourselves; and although you should in time, from the benefit of a happier genius, or a better education, arrive to greater clearness of judgment and strength of reason than your parents, yet still as long as you continue a part of their family, you are to pay them that obedience that is due to them as masters of their own household; and therefore are never to swerve from their commands, unless they should enjoin something contrary to the commands of God: in that case (and in that alone) your disobedience must be excused from the prior obligation you owe to your Creator, whose commands no mortal can control or dispense with: and even in this case, after you have made all the modest and dutiful remonstrances in your power, you are to obey passively; that is, you are patiently to submit to such chastisement as they shall think fit to inflict for your disobedience. For although they should chasten you after their own pleasure, as the apostle intimates, (Heb. ch. xii.) yet

are you to give them reverence. And surely you ought, in common gratitude as well as justice, to bear with their infirmities, who have so often and so long borne with yours.

But there is one instance, wherein obedience to parents is of more importance to children than any other in life, and yet where they too often fail to pay it? and that is in the article of marriage: for, as long as children continue a part of their parent's family, (which must be till they think fit to dispose otherwise of them,) they are absolutely in their parent's power, and have no more right to dispose of themselves than they have to dispose of the parents' fortune or inheritance, or any of their goods; and therefore we find the parental authority of so great extent in the law of Moses, that the daughter who made a vow unknown to her father, was not allowed to ratify it without his consent; as you may read, Numb. xxx.

But the institutions of the ancient Romans carried this point a great deal higher, and made children dependant upon the parental authority during their whole lives; nor could the highest honours or authority in the commonwealth exempt them from it. A father in Rome could call down his son from the rostrum, in the midst of his harangue to the people, to punish him for any misdemeanour: he could command him in the same manner from the senate, or from the head of his legions. Nor did the people, the fathers, or the army, dare to interpose in his defence: they considered the duty to parents as a prior obligation, which nothing subsequent could cancel. And doubtless this was one reason why the Roman marriages continued so long sacred and undisturbed; because they were never made, but with advice and deliberation of their parents. And, indeed, the contrary conduct is an instance of disobedience, that commonly carries its own punishment with it: and it is to be hoped, there are few children to whose final account this sin will be placed, because I am persuaded there are few that have been guilty of it, who have not had reason to repent very sincerely of it to the last day of their lives. And the reason of this is evident: the

persons that take the eyes of young people most, are such as are skilled in the courtly forms and fashions of the world: such as have laid themselves out to dress and dance, and acquire such superficial and shewy accomplishments, as are too often at the greatest distance in the world from modesty and good-nature, and good sense; and, above all, from solid principles of true religion and virtue, which are the true foundations of all conjugal accomplishments.

Prudent parents well know, that the true conjugal attractions arise, not from outward ornament, but inward excellence. This is a law established in morality, and is in exact analogy to that great law established in nature; which teaches us, that the attractions of bodies are not in proportion to their surface, but their solid contents. Prudent parents well know, that such accomplishments as either arise from, or tend to establish true worth, can alone render any pair happy in an union that must last for life. This, I say, all prudent parents very well know; and therefore are best fitted to make a right choice for their children; but still with this caution, that they do not offer violence to their inclinations, by forcing them to marry against their will. For the rest, it were infinitely better, that perverse children should actually die in the disappointment of their inclinations, than that they should make both themselves and their parents for ever miserable, by an unfortunate and undutiful marriage.

S E R M O N CXIX.

By PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The same Subject continued.

EXOD. xx. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

In a former discourse upon these words, I shewed you, that this duty of honouring our parents was of great extent; that it comprehended, first, the duty we owe to our kings and governors, who are the

common fathers of their country; secondly, the duty we owe to our spiritual pastors and teachers, who have discharged the best offices of parents towards us, in teaching us true principles of religion and virtue; and, thirdly, the duty you owe to your natural parents, all those whom the providence of God hath placed in their stead; which consists of three parts: first, reverence; secondly, obedience; and, thirdly, a grateful retribution of the benefits that we have received from them.

Under the first head, I shewed you, that the duty of reverence to your parents discovered itself both in words and actions; in modest and respectful language to your parents, and a dutiful submissive demeanour towards them. A remarkable instance of which I shewed you, in the behaviour of Joseph to a poor, old, blind, decrepit father, when he himself was in the highest point of glory and wisdom. (Gen. xlviii.)

Under the second head, of obedience due to parents, I shewed you the great stress that God Almighty hath laid upon this duty; how strictly it was enjoined in the holy scriptures; the blessings promised to it, and the curses and signal judgments of God denounced against the transgression of it in the law of Moses; which placed the crime of disobedience to parents upon the same foot with that of blasphemy against God! that the stubborn and undutiful child was to be stoned to death, like the blasphemers.

I shewed you also, that this duty to parents was in the highest veneration among the wiser heathens; the ancient Romans, in their best days of virtue; and the present Chinese, with whom undutifulness to parents undergoes, at this day, the most dreadful punishments that can be imagined.

I come now to the third thing proposed; which was to shew you, that you must honour your parents, as by reverence and obedience, so, likewise by a thankful and grateful return of all the blessings and benefits conferred upon you by them, as far as you are able, and they are in need. And this the apostle expressly enjoins, (1. Tim. v. 4.) *If any widows have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to*

requite their parents. The apostle mentions the children of widows in particular, because widowhood is the condition in life most subject to want and distress; and where children, taking the advantage of the weakness of a helpless mother, are most apt to be rebellious and undutiful: the purpose of the apostle in this precept being to imply, from this particular instance, the duty of obedience, and support, and retribution, due from children to parents, whenever the ill state of their affairs requires it; and even when they are least in a condition to exact their gratitude, or punish their disobedience. A remarkable instance of this piety and reverence due to parents is in the behaviour of Solomon to his mother Bathsheba, (1 Kings, ii. 19.) when she came to solicit him in favour of Adonijah; for the text tells us, *that the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her; and sat down on the throne; and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.* This he did to a widow mother, himself a king, the wisest of all mankind, and then the mightiest monarch of the whole world. He knew the duties of life rose with its grandeur, and gave new lustre to it: his enlarged and generous soul could not bear to have his piety less exalted than his power. And it is well known that there are, at this day, princes in the world, whose veneration for their parents will not suffer them so much as to sit down in their presence. And, God knows, the pious returns due from children to parents are at once the strongest dictates of gratitude and justice, and are but a poor retribution for all the care and expence of education, for all the anxious hours, and sleepless nights, that have been passed in solicitude for our welfare, and in distress for our ill health, and ill conduct. And will you requite all this affection with ingratitude and neglect? will you let them suffer under any necessity which you can relieve, who supported you for so many years of helpless want? will you despise their persons, of whom yourself are a part? Surely, if the ingenuity of nature, and the principles of reason and virtue, are not quite extinguished in you, the love solicitude your parents have long

felt for you will exact ample returns from you : if not in equal measure, (which perhaps is not possible,) yet in the fullest, the amplest, the most acceptable that is in your power to make.

The course and compass of God's providence, and his methods of establishing and evidencing the measures of reciprocal duty, is no-where more remarkable than in the mutual obligations between parents and their children (I say the course of God's providence is no-where more remarkable, than in the measures of duty and obligation established between parents and their children); the child comes into the world naked and helpless, and, from himself, more destitute of the natural means of security and support, than almost any of the inferior creatures. In this exigency, the parental care and tenderness steps in to his relief; supplies all his necessities, and relieves all his wants; bears with all his untowardly dispositions, at an age when he is neither capable of being corrected, or convinced; and not only provides the properest food for him, when he is incapable of providing any for himself, but likewise administers it when he is incapable of feeding himself; bears with all degrees of his folly and impertinence; listens to all his trifling and idle enquiries, not only with patience but with pleasure; till they gradually conduct him to health, and strength, and knowledge; but the child is not long arrived at this perfection of his nature, before his parents begin to fall gradually into the same infirmities, through which they but lately conducted and supported their children; and to need the same assistance which they lately lent. And, first, they begin to grow sickly; and then they call for the aid of that health which they cultivated and took care of in their children. The loss of cheerfulness and good humour commonly succeeds the loss of health; the old parents are uneasy, and fret at all about them. and now is the time for children to return all that tenderness and patience to their parents' peevishness, without sourness or reproof, which their parents had long lent them in all their childish perverseness, at an age when they were not capable of being corrected. In the next place, the old parents grow troublesomely talkative and (as youth is

too apt to think) impertinent; and dwell eternally upon the observations and adventures of their times, and earlier years. Remember, you also had your time of being talkative and impertinent, and your parents bore with you; but, with this difference, you asked them silly and trifling questions, and they now tell wise and useful observations. But are troublesome, because they tell too often. The answer to this is very obvious; if your parents bore with your folly, you may well bear their wisdom: and although, perhaps, they talk more than is necessary to inform you of present things, yet their conversation turns mostly upon things past, perhaps past many years before you came into the world, and, consequently, such as they must know a thousand times better than you; or, though they should talk more than is necessary to inform you, they do not talk more than is necessary to inform your servants, or your children, who are now come to an age of asking many questions; and, therefore, Providence hath well appointed, that their grandfather or grandmother are now in an humour to answer them all, and to supply them with a store of useful observations which they want; nay, which they want to hear over and over again; which they want to have inculcated a thousand times; and which, without this assistance, would require a course of years to acquire for themselves. So that this humour of talkativeness, which is commonly thought so troublesome in old people, hath its use, and is most excellently appointed by Almighty God. But, say it were not, the children, in bearing with it, do but barely return their parents what they long since owed them.

In the next place, the strength of the old parents fails them, and they cannot walk without a support: but, sure, you will not let them want one! How many years did they bear you in their arms! How many more did they lead you when you would be, and saved you from falling, and from danger! And will you now suffer those old limbs to totter and fall to the earth, which so often supported and saved yours, when they were weak and tender, and unable to support and save themselves? Certainly you will not;

you cannot at once be guilty of so much cruelty and ingratitude. In the last place, the understandings of the old parents begin to fail, and the strength of their minds doth not long outlive the strength of their bodies; but decays gradually, till they become again children; their teeth fall, and their tongues fail, and they are once more infants; and are confined to their beds, as they were first to their cradles. This is the last stage of life, and here they demand all that care, and compassion, and tenderness, at your hands, when they are just going out of the world, which you called for at theirs, when you first came into it.

Thus is the course of nature fulfilled, and the circle of God's providence completed. And what child, that had the least remains of gratitude or goodness, would not be delighted to pay off this great debt of nature, to pursue this round of filial duty, in a conscientious discharge of all the good offices they owe their aged parents? Nay, what child, that had any goodness, would not regard this retribution as his greatest honour and happiness? What child, that had any goodness, would wish to live longer in this world, than whilst God inclined his heart to this delightful and glorious branch of his duty? For, surely, it is in this respect, more than in any other whatsoever, that Solomon's observation is verified, when he tells us, that *fathers are the glory of their children*.

And here we see, in part, the reason of the reward of *long life* promised in the text to dutiful children: for, as nothing so naturally shortens the lives of parents, as the misery and distress brought upon them by the disobedience and impiety of their children; and, on the other hand, nothing so greatly contributes to the peace and happiness of parents, and, of consequence, to their health and life, as the obedience and piety of their issue; nothing can be a more suitable reward of that piety than length of life: and surely the blessing of *long life*, annexed to the duty of honouring the father and mother, is no-where so complete, is no-where so perfect a blessing, as when the child hath the happiness to pay off the great debt of gratitude to his aged parents, to return some part of what he owes to

them, for support and correction, for affection and tenderness, for example and instruction; and, in one word, for all the blessings of a religious and virtuous education. A debt for ever to be paid, and never to be discharged; and therefore, Homer, in his usual strength of just and fine thinking, mentions it as a calamitous circumstance in the death of a young hero, that he was cut off in his bloom, before he had made any retribution to his parents for his education and support—*ἔδ' ἄποκενθε θεοῖσιν φίλοις ἀντίδωκεν*.

Nay, although a parent were faulty, and failed in any or all these instances, yet still humanity calls upon us to compassionate their infirmities; and generosity should prompt us to upbraid them with our goodness, and to pay where we did not owe. There is an instance of heathen piety in this point, that Christians should blush at: T. Manlius was ill treated, and turned out of doors, by a severe father, who was soon after called to an account by the tribune for this, and some other part of his conduct. A day was appointed for his trial, and every one concluded his life was lost. The son heard of his danger, and, without saying a word to any mortal, went secretly to the tribune, and enquired about it. The tribune answered, that what he had heard was truth; and that a principal part of the accusation against him was a cruel treatment he, his son, had received from him. Upon this, Manlius puts a dagger to the tribune's breast, and vowed immediate death to him, if he did not that moment drop the prosecution. The tribune, in terror of his life, solemnly swore he would, and did accordingly; and the next day reported the whole truth to the assembly; and the father was acquitted for the generosity of the son. How few sons are there now in the world who would make as generous a return to the tenderness and fondness of their fathers, as this son did to the cruelty of his!

There is also a remarkable instance of filial piety in the history of China. In the reign of the Emperor Vuen Ti, a mandarin was condemned to death; and was guilty enough to deserve it. He had the good fortune to have a daughter affectionate and dutiful to him, beyond the

ordinary measures of filial piety; who addressed the Emperor in his behalf, presenting a memorial to him, wherein she offered herself a slave for life, to save the life of her father. The emperor, struck with so extraordinary an instance of piety, pardoned the father, and left his daughter in her freedom (Churchill's Collect. vol. i. p. 164.) And this was the more remarkable, inasmuch as daughters are little regarded by the Chinese, and often exposed.

There is one instance of filial obedience in the Scriptures, and of the great regard which God hath to it, both of a very extraordinary nature. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, had laid his commands upon his sons, that neither they, nor their descendants should drink wine, or build houses, or till the earth for ever; but that they should lead a pastoral life, and dwell in tents. This command of their father both they and their children so religiously obeyed, for many generations, that, in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, they gave a public proof of their piety to their parent in the temple, and in the presence of the prophet, as you may read in the xxxvth chapter of the prophesy of the prophet Jeremiah, the 1st and the following verses. And although these commands of their father Jonadab had no strict claim to their obedience, either from the law of Nature or the law of God, but might well enough be dispensed with consistently with both; yet God (to shew the regard he hath for piety to parents) was graciously pleased to reward their obedience in a very extraordinary manner; as you may read in the foregoing chapter, at the 18th and 19th verses. *And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Because you have obeyed the voice of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel—Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.*

And thus we have gone through the several parts of a child's duty to his parents, and have shewn you the great regard that Almighty God beareth to filial piety. I have shewn, that you are to

honour your parents in words and actions, with expressions of respect and reverence, and with a modest and submissive behaviour, with a dutiful obedience to all their lawful commands, and a grateful retribution of all the blessings and mercies you have received from them: remember the blessing of long life promised by God to your obedience, and assure yourself that blessing, well used, will end in a blessing of life everlasting. On the other hand, remember the dreadful imprecations pronounced upon neglect, and impiety, and disobedience to parents. Remember whose eye it is that the ravens of a valley shall eat, and whose light it is that shall be put out in obscure darkness; in obscure darkness in this world, and eternal darkness in the next; even his, *that curseth his father or his mother; and his, that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother.* Nor are these curses due only to him that insults and abuses his parents, but also to him that slights and neglects them; for so we read, (Deut. xxvii. 16.) *cursed is he that setteth light by his father or mother: and all the people shall say, Amen.* But if all this cannot move you, if you have no compassion for your own immortal souls, have some pity upon your afflicted and aged parents: (I speak this to an audience*, which I hope is, I am sure ought to be, more sensible in this point, than any other of a different condition in the whole world.) My own experience (in this place*) hath fully informed me, of the infinite, the unspeakable concern of parents, for the well-being of their children, and their much more unspeakable sorrow and affliction for their miscarriage. I have seen such joy rising in the eyes of a happy parent, upon the receiving a glad account of his son's conduct, as hath infused new transport into my own heart; and on the other hand, I have seen such distracted looks, such fixed distress, such tears of anguish, from the eyes of unhappy parents, as have pierced my heart. If your parents' grief make this impression upon the breasts of strangers, can you be insensible of it? Is there in nature a greater instance of cruelty, than to give calamity and affliction where we owe joy and transport, and

who could pay it with double happiness to ourselves? Was ever any instance of humanity devised like that of making those irrepressibly miserable, who have made the business of their lives to make us actually happy? Murder is, in every instance, and under the most alleviating circumstances of passion and provocation, a most heinous and detestable sin; but,

the bringing down a parent's grey sorrow to the grave, is murder in its deadliest shape! I have often seen the condition of executioners, who were forced, from the misery of their circumstances, to inflict the necessary severities of the law upon the basest of mankind. I should die to think of punishing my own parent, although he were a malefactor; but to punish an innocent and a good man, to punish an innocent and a good woman, my tender parent, and my best friend: and that too with such anguish as is not in the power of tyranny—O God! deliver all that fear thee from so exquisite a calamity!

If any of you that hear me have been guilty of this sin, make haste to repent of it; for, surely judgment is gone out against it; and nothing less than a thorough repentance, the repentance of our whole lives, can arrest the vengeance due to it. If any of you are in a course of vice or idleness, or in any purpose of disobedience or displeasure to your parents, let this single consideration stop you short. Will you indulge your own idle purposes, or vicious pleasures, or obstinate perverseness, at the expense of your parents' happiness? Will you live idle and wanton, to make them labour under affliction and sorrow all their days? Will you add murder to iniquity? If vice were attended with no other evil; if neither poverty, nor disease, nor infamy waited upon it; if there were no such thing as a heaven or hell hereafter; if neither death nor damnation pursued it; the single consideration of misery to your distressed, pining parents should make you dread it in every instance, and shun it in every shape. Which that we, may all
B, &c.

SERMON CXX.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The Duty of Servants to their Masters.

EPHES. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing, that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

SERVITUDE seems to have been originally founded in the natural inequality in the abilities of men: for as some men, from the advantage of greater prudence and more extensive knowledge, are fitted to direct and preside in the conduct of affairs; so others, for want of those advantages, and through a natural incapacity of providing and directing, were obliged to submit themselves and their concerns to the guidance and discretion of other men. And as this difference of abilities occasioned as great a difference in the possessions of men, upon the establishment of property in the world, from hence also arose another reason of servitude; forasmuch as some men being entirely destitute of property, or at least such a portion of it as was sufficient for their support, were forced to let themselves out to hire, and give their labour in exchange for the necessaries of life. And as these compacts were originally established for life, (or at least too quickly became so,) with a power of arbitrary correction and chastisements in the master, even to maiming and death; the insolence and cruelty of inhuman masters made the condition of servants a state of unspeakable misery for many generations: and the natural consequence from such ill treatment and inhumanity, on the side of the masters, was an idleness and neglect on the side of the servants, and an utter disregard of their master's interest, whenever it was consistent with their own safety; together

with secret resolutions of revenge, upon the first opportunity. And hence it is, that in all the ancient comedies, which are the truest representations of life, the business of the slave is, always to corrupt the son and defraud the master: that is, to injure him in his two nearest concerns; not without violence to his person, whenever he can find any pretence for a disguise to execute his vengeance with impunity.

In this condition Christianity found the world; and as it is the business of that excellent institution to correct the errors of mankind, and improve their manners; to banish violence and villainy, and introduce peace and good-will in their stead; the world has been gradually humanized and improved by it, as in every other instance, so likewise in this of dominion and servitude. That excellent religion which teaches us, that humility, and mercy, and love are the distinguishing badges of our Christian profession, could not fail to teach us the duty of treating our fellow-creatures with gentleness and humanity, and inspire us with an utter abhorrence of that cruelty to our Christian brethren, which would ill-become us to the beasts that perish; nay, and would be criminal even there. And hence it came to pass, that the laws of perpetual servitude, and the power of life and limbs, were gradually relaxed and taken away; and mankind restored to their native and original freedom, and social rights. And although many of them cannot yet subside out of a state of servitude, yet are they under no necessity of continuing in it, for any longer term than they themselves have consented to: so that, if they cannot live in absolute freedom, they have at least what is next to it; for to have it in our power to change our masters after a determined time, and cease to serve whenever the condition of our affairs will allow us, is in the next degree to full liberty. In the mean time, the lives and limbs of servants are as well secured to them, at least in this part of the world, as their masters is to them; and to deprive them of either is, in the eye of the law, equally criminal. But then, on the other hand, that masters should not be put in a worse condition, by the diminution of their powers and prerogatives over their servants, the Chris-

tian religion hath now bound all the duty and fidelity upon the consciences of servants, which before were only the effects of restraint and fear. Hence it is, that St. Paul, in the words of my text, enjoins servants to pay all kind of observance to their masters, from the motives of a good conscience, and a sense of duty towards God; assuring them that an honest discharge of their duty in this point is highly acceptable in the sight of God, and will have its reward. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing, that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

Now, the business of this discourse shall be, from these words of the apostle, to explain and enforce the duty of servants in all its parts; which I shall endeavour to do, in the proof and enforcement of the following propositions.

First, Servants are to obey their masters; and, secondly, they are to be faithful to them.

First, I say, they are to obey, their masters. And this necessarily arises from the nature of servitude; for the very condition of that compact is, that one man shall submit his will and actions to the discretion and direction of another: and therefore a servant is supposed to have no will of his own, where his master is concerned; but to submit himself entirely to the will of his master, and to obey all his lawful commands.

By lawful commands are meant all such as are not contrary to the laws of God, or the community: and the reason of this is evident; because all mankind are under prior obligations to God and society, and therefore all other engagements must yield to these; and, whenever they happen to be inconsistent with them, they immediately cease, and become null and void. Therefore, if your master should command you to lie or steal, to defame or defraud, or commit any vice or villainy whatsoever, there you are absolutely to

disobey him; because God hath commanded you not to do any of these things; and the apostles have taught us, that we ought to *obey God rather than men*. But as long as the master's commands are within the bounds of religion, and the laws of the land, so far the servant is obliged to submit, and pay entire obedience to them; and this he is to do with fear and cheerfulness.

First, He is to obey with fear! *Servants* (saith the apostle,) *be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling*. Now, where men find themselves obliged to a dutiful and conscientious obedience, it is unavoidable but that they must be afraid of giving any offence, or provoking to anger and resentment, by neglect and disobedience. Fear is a natural restraint upon the giddiness and perverseness of our nature: it awakens all our caution and diligence, and makes us attentive and observant: it makes us careful to understand the directions of our superiors, and diligent to execute them. And therefore we may say of it in this case, as Eliphaz does to Job, *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence?* The sense of a proper awe upon our minds gives us the best assurance of our having a due regard to the commands of our superiors, and the discharge of our duty. Besides this, fear is the great principle of prudence, as well as industry: it awakens the abilities of the soul, sets them to work upon their proper objects, and urges them to their proper ends. Almost all knowledge, as well as discipline and virtue, are founded in fear. *The fear of the Lord*, saith Solomon, *is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do thereafter*. And as the fear of the highest authority naturally leads us to the highest and most excellent wisdom (the knowledge of the laws and will of our Creator); so the reverence we owe to the inferior degrees of it leads us to proportionable degrees of discretion and prudence in the conduct of our lives. And therefore servants are to be awfully observant and obedient to the commands of their masters, not only for conscience sake, but likewise on account of that improvement of their own minds and manners, which such a reverence and

fear of authority will naturally inspire. But,

Secondly, Servants are to obey with cheerfulness; *with good-will doing service*, saith the apostle: and therefore they are carefully to avoid all that sullen and surly behaviour which renders their persons hateful, and their best services disagreeable. A sourness and restiveness to the commands of superiors is a sure indication of inherent pride, that disdains subjection; and is much better fitted for insolence in power, than obedience in subjection. And this spirit of insolence is so frequently to be met with in servants, that a man who makes right reflections upon it will find infinite reason to bless the good providence of Almighty God, by whose wise appointments so many turbulent and malignant spirits were placed in a condition of the lowest subjection; who, had they been raised to dominion and rule, would have been the greatest monsters of oppression and tyranny that ever the world produced. Histories of all ages are full of examples to this purpose: and that this is the sense of mankind upon the point, may be collected from the proverbs of all nations, which have not failed to observe upon the remarkable insolence of persons raised from a low condition to any heights of fortune. And this is so apparent in a thousand instances, that (as Sylla is said to have seen many Marius's in Cæsar) some men of good understanding have been confident, that they have observed many Neroes in a common footman, or day-labourer: and therefore persons of this character, instead of indulging their innate pride, in insolence and sullenness to their superiors, should endeavour, to the utmost of their power, to subdue it to the dictates of their duty: and remember, it was the great goodness of Almighty God, to place them in that low condition of life, where the malignity of their nature would have the least room to exert itself; and where they have avoided much of that guilt, and that punishment, which higher degrees of power and affluence would have devolved upon them. And this motive to modesty and submission in servants will be much strengthened by considering that pride and stiffness will af-

ways expose them to ill treatment. A modest demeanour, joined to a readiness to execute the master's commands, is such an indication of a good mind and good will to their service, as naturally wins their affection, and inclines them, in return, to do you all the good offices in their power; and to make the yoke of servitude sit as light and easy upon you as they can; whereas the contrary behaviour will always excite them to such degrees of rebuke and correction, as perhaps you can very ill bear; and yet are obliged in conscience to submit to, whether they be just or unjust. *Servants*, saith St. Peter, in the 2d chapter of his first epistle, at the 18th and following verses—*Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully: for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.* From hence we learn, that servants are not only obliged to submit to the just corrections of their masters, but likewise to such as are the effects of frowardness and ill temper. And as nothing is so apt to sour the temper of the best masters as sullenness and insolence in their servants, so nothing is more apt to bring unjust correction upon them; because it makes every thing they do disagreeable, however right in itself; and urges the master to lay hold on all opportunities and pretences of subduing and mortifying that evil spirit by the sharpest and severest correction. Whereas, on the other hand, humility and meekness have the happiest effects upon the dispositions of all they deal with: they turn the edge of the sharpest rage; they are like wool-sacks to the fiercest instruments of war; their yielding softness abates their violence and subdues their force. Meekness is, in this respect, like charity; for as it *beareth all things*, so likewise doth it *cover a multitude of sins*. *A soft answer* (saith Solomon) *turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* And again, *By long forbearance is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.*

That is, gentle and modest replies soften the most hardened and obstinate dispositions; and descend, as the Psalmist expresses it, *like oil into the bones*. Modesty and humility are as the grave ground in a picture, which sets off the fairest colours, and shews all the figures to greater advantage. Modesty, in a servant, places all his actions in the best light; and inclines the most froward and petulant masters to bear with their infirmities, and put the best construction upon all their conduct.

But farther, Servants are not only to submit to the correction of their masters, but they are to profit and become better by it; for amendment and reformation are the end of all correction: and therefore servants must not think they have done enough, when they have listened calmly to the master's rebuke, or submitted patiently to his chastisement; for all this is to no purpose, unless they are amended by it. And therefore they are to observe, and reflect carefully upon the reasons and circumstances of their mis carriage and misbehaviour, whenever they have committed a fault; and make serious resolutions of more care and better conduct another time. For example: this was the effect of sloth and idleness. *Thy* my conceit brought upon me. Had I listened to good advice, I might have avoided this mischief; and so on. And forasmuch as the business of most servants lies within a very narrow compass, the sum of their employment being a train of the very same low offices repeated every day, with very little variety; it is evident, that as there is but a very moderate degree of capacity required to enable them to know their duty, so likewise as moderate a degree of care and diligence will enable them to discharge it as they ought; and therefore, whatever excuse there may be for the first committal of faults, there can be none for the frequent repetition of them, especially after correction; for even brute beasts will learn to shun those actions that are attended with punishments, even against the instinct of nature. They will learn to fly from meats and drinks that are naturally very agreeable and desirable to them; and therefore, for reasonable creatures to commit the same faults to which they can have no natural instinct

after frequent rebuke and correction, is in truth to become more than brutal; to act even below the beasts that perish. And therefore it is no wonder, if the command of such incorrigible creatures is utter ruin and destruction. The master grows weary of correction, and lets them go their own way; and their own way being the way of vice and villainy leads directly to infamy and the gallows. And indeed, this is also God's way of dealing with incorrigible sinners: for whom he loveth, he chasteneth; but when chastening hath no effect for their amendment, he delivers them over to a reprobate sense.

And thus much in proof and explanation of the first proposition I laid down; namely, that servants are to obey their masters.

I come now to the second proposition I proposed to speak to; and that was, that servants are to be faithful to their masters.

And this faithfulness is of two sorts: the first consists in an honest discharge of duty to them, in every thing they employ you about, to the best of your abilities. If in bodily labour, you are to labour in their service as far as your health and strength will allow: if in the abilities of your mind, you are to serve them to the best of your understanding, without injuring their affairs by sloth, or delay, or negligence: and this kind of fidelity is opposed to *eye-service*.

The next sort of faithfulness consists in being true and just to your masters in every thing committed to your trust: and this fidelity is opposed to fraud and theft.

First, I say, you are to serve him with an honest diligence, without idleness, neglect, or delay: and this the apostle requires, when he enjoins servants to be obedient to their masters, *not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*. That is you are to employ yourselves diligently in your master's service, not barely whilst his eye is upon you, and you are apprehensive of being chastised for your idleness; but at all times; even when he is least likely to see or to punish your neglect. And this you are to do in discharge of a good con-

science, because you are paid for it: your time and strength are no longer your own, when you are hired; they are your master's; and to be employed in his service; and consequently you cannot employ them as you please, but as he directs: nor can you misemploy them, or withhold them from him, without manifest fraud and injustice. Robbing a man of the time he hath bought of you is just as wicked as to rob him of his money, or his goods, or any other purchase he hath paid for. The injustice is exactly the same in both; and therefore the apostle saith, you are to be obedient to your masters, *not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*; that is, you are to discharge the duties of your service out of a sense of conscience, in full assurance that in so doing you do what God requires of you; for God requires justice in all your dealings, and will severely punish the neglect and violation of it: and therefore, although your master doth not behold your idleness, God sees it, and will require a severe account of it; and you can no more escape his vengeance than you can avoid his sight: besides, it has pleased God so to order the state of things here below, that diligence and industry are the sure way to health, and credit, and prosperity in the world.

Idleness is able to destroy the best constitution of body and mind that ever was framed! and I myself have observed beggars, who began in sloth, end in real infirmities, and a ruined constitution. And it is notorious of numbers of people that they lose their limbs for want of using them; whereas all the powers of soul and body are remarkably improved by application and exercise. Milo, who had just strength enough the first day to lift a calf, by constant practice of lifting him every day, became at last to have strength enough to lift him, even when he was grown up into an ox: and the greatest prodigies of wisdom and science that ever appeared in the world had their beginnings in the same low rudiments of knowledge with the rest of mankind. Men are born, in the general, nearly equal: instruction and industry, culture and diligence, make the great distinctions between man and man. Industry is of

so excellent a nature, that it will scarcely suffer any bounds to be set to our improvement; nor is it possible to say, to what strength of body and mind unwearied application will carry us at the last! and therefore Solomon most excellently advises, *Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.* A motto, that ought to be graven in characters of gold, over the shops of all artists, as well as the closets of the studious. Solomon well knew the worth of diligence, (and perhaps none but the wisest man that ever lived was acquainted with its full value,) and therefore he is large in the praise of it: *He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.* Again, *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute.* *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.* And again, *Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.* And therefore, if you will not be negligent and industrious for your masters' sakes, be so at least for your own; to acquire such habits as will strengthen your body and your mind, and raise you to credit and prosperity in the world: and, what is more, will keep you out of idleness, the great parent of vice and wickedness of every kind, which will clothe you with infamy and rags, and bring you to certain ruin at the last; will destroy you, body and soul.

The last duty required of servants is faithfulness to their trust; that is, an honest care and management of all goods and things committed to their charge, without fraud or waste. And this is of all others the highest and most important part of the servant's duty; because his own conscience, and his master's interest, are more nearly concerned in it than in any other: it being oftentimes in the power of a wicked servant, by one hour's wilful villainy in this point, to ruin the best master and wealthiest man. And therefore the apostle, in the words of my text, enjoins servants to be obedient to their masters, *in singleness of heart*; that is, with an honest and upright mind. And (Titus, ii. 9.) he directs that bishop to exhort servants to be obedient to their

masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, nor purloining; but shewing all good fidelity.

And under this head of *purloining* are to be reduced all frauds of every kind, all bribes, all false weights and measures, by which the servants are profited, and the master is injured; in short, all possible ways whereby servants are wont to make gain, or interest, or friendship for themselves, to the loss and damage of their masters: for all these ways of gain are downright frauds and thefts, and are but the more criminal, as they are contrived with more subtlety and security: nay, this sort of cheating is much baser, and more villainous, than common stealing; because you do not only defraud your master but you likewise break faith, and betray your trust at the same time: you add treachery to theft! and therefore this villainy is doubly hateful to God and man.

The other way of being unfaithful to your master is by wasting his goods, although without profit to yourself, or suffering them to be embezzled by others; and this is, in effect, and in the consequences of it to your masters, the very same with wilful fraud and theft. For what matters it to your master whether he is injured or ruined by your fraud or by your negligence? So that the breach of trust in you, and the evil to your master, is exactly the same in both. He trusted you with his substance, and you have betrayed him to his damage; it may be, to his ruin.

As the world is constituted, it is impossible to live or transact our affairs in life without confiding in somebody or other, upon a thousand occasions; and on whom can you depend with so much security as on him that eats of your bread, and is bound by all the ties of duty and conscience to be faithful to you? And what advantage would it be to masters, to be secure that their servants would not themselves cheat them, if at the same time, through their idleness or negligence, they suffer others to defraud them? And therefore, he that suffers his master to be injured through his fault, although without profit to himself, betrays his trust, and is as criminal in the sight of God, as if he had injured him for his own gain;

nay, rather, he is more criminal; for he that injures his master for his own profit hath some plea, some pretence for his villainy, and some temptation to it; whereas he that injures him without any advantage to himself hath no pretence, not so much as the excuse of a temptation for his wickedness; and therefore such a one takes to himself the most scandalous and detestable character in the world, that of being wicked for wickedness sake.

And here I must take notice, that there is one kind of waste wherein servants are more frequently faulty towards their masters than any other; and that is, waste of food, and this is of two sorts: one is, when they suffer any meats or drinks, under their care, to perish, be lost, or become useless, through their negligence. Now every waste of this kind is a grievous wickedness; inasmuch as, besides the injury to the owners, it is despising the Divine bounty and beneficence; and, in effect, trampling the gifts of God under foot. Which is surely a most shocking complication of insolence and ingratitude! and one would think our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ had effectually guarded against this guilt at the close of that glorious miracle, whereby he fed so immense a multitude with five loaves and two fishes (St. John, ch. vi.); for when he had done so, he gave express orders to *gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*. Although this food was produced in all the abundance of Divine munificence, and with all the ease of Almighty power; yet care was taken by the very Creator himself, that not the least part of it should be abused to waste.

The next kind of waste which servants are too frequently guilty of, is the abuse of meats and drinks committed to their care, to the purposes of riot and excess; to make themselves useless to all the duties of their station, it may be, to their own, and to the ruin of others: nay more, oftentimes to the intoxicating the servants of others, so as to make them also useless at best; and too often even destructive to the houses, and limbs, and lives of their masters and mistresses intrusted to them. How dreadful a guilt is this, thus to pervert the pur-

poses of the Divine beneficence! Negligent waste is trampling the gifts of God under foot; but riotous waste is turning his blessings into curses; into curses upon yourselves and others! To how many excellent purposes might those wastes of excess, now so pernicious, be applied! to lighten the labours of life; to soften the bed of sickness, to *make the widow's heart sing for joy*. What infinite evil doth waste commit! what infinite good doth it prevent, and pervert; and the authors of it, how extensively are they, how effectually, how emphatically wicked!

But there is one point wherein the fidelity of servants is more eminently required than in any other whatsoever, and yet where they are wont to abuse and betray their trust more than in any other: and that is, the care of their master's children. I shall omit a thousand instances of misconduct and abuse, and instance only in two. The first is, that abominable custom among servants, of teaching children vice and wickedness, as the first rudiments of knowledge. And this is so notorious, that, take any child you meet, and it is odds but the first sentence or word he learnt to speak, was either an oath or an ill name: and if servants are taken to task for this villainy, they answer, there is no manner of harm in it, because the poor child does not know what he says. Perhaps he does not; but yet it is more probable that he does; for it is certain, that children often understand words even before they can speak them; and if they do speak some ill words before they understand them, I dare say, it will not be your fault if they continue long in that ignorance; for the same corruption of mind that prompted you to teach them those ill words, will also prompt you to make them understand what is meant by them, 'as soon as you can'; and not only understand, but practise too. Ye wicked creatures! little do you consider, that the first impressions made upon children, always sink the deepest, and last the longest, and are hardly possible to be effaced from the mind. And therefore Solomon rightly advises, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*. And the observation is

full as true, I am afraid, more so, if you train him up in the way he should not go. Shame is the great guardian of youth, the great barrier that secures them from sin and wickedness; and if that be early taken away, a flood of vice will break in upon them like a torrent, and overwhelm the whole man. Alas! little do ye consider what you will have to answer for at the great day of account, who, in return to all the care and kindness of a good master, have destroyed, perhaps, his only child, and turned the innocence of an angel into the guilt of a devil. I would to God, that, in order to deter servants from this abominable practice, there were laws to make all crimes of this kind punishable by the most tormenting death that ever was invented; and yet, when that was done, it would make but little atonement for those infinitely greater torments of hell, to which those wretches had betrayed so many helpless and innocent infants.

The second instance I shall mention of the infidelity of servants to the children of their masters, and too often to themselves, is flattery; a vice which is founded in the worst corruption of a wicked heart, and is the greatest destroyer of every virtue in the soul; it is a rank manure which raises nothing but weeds in the best soils. Nor is this all; for as it raises and feeds the worst weeds, it kills the best plants, and suffers nothing good and salutary to live near it. A flatterer always puts me in mind of those filthy beasts mentioned by many naturalists, whose way of destroying all that will endure them is by licking them to death.

And thus I have done with the several parts of the servant's duty; and the sum of all that God requires of him, is this; first, that he be obedient to all his master's just commands; that is, such as are not contrary to the laws of God, or the laws of the land: but he is not to obey him in any thing that is evil; therefore he is not to swear, or lie, or defraud, or commit any sort of vice or villainy, in obedience to his master; because God has forbidden him to do any of these things; and he is to obey God rather than man.

Secondly, He is to obey his master with fear. And this will make him cau-

tious and observant; will check the natural pride and perverseness of human nature, and bring him, by degrees, to discretion and prudence; for all wisdom, and all virtue, begins and is founded in fear.

Thirdly, He is to obey cheerfully, with good-will doing service; and therefore he is carefully to avoid all pride and insolence, all short and sullen answers. These are the faults that make servants hateful, and render every thing they do, disagreeable, and expose them to the wrath and vengeance of their master; whereas modesty and cheerfulness recommend both themselves, and every thing they do; and place all their services in the best light.

Fourthly, They are to submit to the corrections of their masters, whether just or unjust; and not only to submit to them, but to amend by them. To be incorrigible even in neglect (and much more in guilt) is a most shameful character; and seldom ends but in utter ruin.

Fifthly, Servants are to use an honest diligence in the discharge of their duty; and this, in opposition to idleness and eye-service; and this they are to do, first, for conscience-sake towards their masters, because God requires it of them: and, secondly, for their own sakes, because diligence and industry are the sure means to health, and credit, and prosperity in the world.

And, in the last place, Servants are to be true and just to their masters; and faithful in the care and discharge of all trusts committed to them (especially the care of his children); and are neither to injure or defraud them themselves, nor to suffer others to do so; because all the injury you do your master, if it be for your own profit, is theft; and the worst of all thefts, because it is attended with treachery and breach of trust; and if it be without profit to yourself, the injury to your master, and the breach of trust in you, is still the same; and you are at the same time more inexcusable, because you commit wickedness for wickedness sake.

And now, my brethren, when you have discharged all these parts of your duty, the next thing incumbent upon you as good Christians, is to be content

with that low condition of life in which it has pleased God to place you? and you will be content, if you consider, that God governs the world; and that all his appointments are the appointments of the wisest and the best of all beings. And therefore, whatever state of life he assigns us, must be the very best that could be assigned us. Had you been placed in a higher station, how can you tell what pride and insolence, what vice and villainy you had been exposed to, which might have ended in the destruction both of your body and soul? And therefore, instead of repining at your condition, you are to bless God, who hath not led you into so great temptations as wealth, and power, and grandeur are, but delivered you from evil. If you suffer from a severe master, consider, that although you might not have deserved chastisement at his hand, you have deserved that, and much more, at the hand of God; and what is it to you, by what instrument it pleases God to execute his correction upon you? And this you know, that if, *when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* Consider moreover, that although your condition is subject to many inconveniences, yet, in the midst of these, it has one great and peculiar advantage; and that is, that you are freed by it from some, if not all the great anxieties of life. For what is all that, for which the sons of men toil and disquiet themselves in this vale of misery, but a little food and raiment, and a convenient shelter from the weather? and two of these the very worst of you have ready provided to your hands, at your master's expence, without any care or trouble of your own; and many of you have all three. But what above all gives the great and distinguishing advantage to your condition is this: that as you have less to be anxious for in this world, you have less to be answerable for in the next; to you less is given, and of you less is required. What are all the power, and wealth, and dominion of this world, but so many great stewardships, of which the owners must give a severe account to their great Lord and Master at the last day? And what man in his senses would wish to have a long and heavy account upon his hands

at the great day of judgment? Do but imagine a mighty potentate, summoned together with his meanest vassal, to the great tribunal of God; and the question fairly put to him, What hast thou done with all that wealth and all that power I committed to thy charge? *Give an account of thy stewardship.* Alas! where is that mighty man upon earth, that could give clear and satisfactory answers to these questions? Who would have wealth, who would have power, who would have a great estate, who would have an empire, upon these terms? Whereas, when the poor servant is questioned, if he has been a good man, his accounts are short, and his answers are easy: Lord, I have served thee, and been faithful to my master; I had but little, and I did my diligence gladly, to give of that little. And the Lord shall answer, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

To which blessed sentence, God, of his infinite mercy, grant we may all be happily entitled, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON CXXI.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The Duty of Masters to their Servants.

EPHES. vi. 9.

And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

THE apostle having, in the foregoing verses, directed the duty of servants, and urged them to a conscientious discharge of it, from a sense of duty towards God, and the rewards that would await their fidelity from his hand; proceeds, in this verse, to enjoin the masters to do the same by them. Now, by doing the same, is not meant doing the very same things, but doing the same reciprocal duties; that is, as servants are to be faithful and

just to their masters, and to perform all parts of their duty towards them, from a regard to conscience, and the rewards of a future state, so likewise are masters to do the same unto them; that is, to perform all the parts of their duty towards their servants, from the same motives and principles. *Forbearing threatening*: or, rather, as the original word signifies, *remitting their threats*; that is, not always executing the harsh declarations they have made, or resolutions they have taken up against them; but refraining and receding from the severe sentences they have denounced in their wrath; remembering, that they also have a Master in heaven, whose will they also violate, and whose commands they disobey; and yet, should he execute his just vengeance upon their transgressions, *should he be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who might abide it?*

From the words thus explained, the business of this discourse shall be, to lay down the duty of masters to their servants in all its parts; and this I shall endeavour to do in the explanation and proof of the following propositions?

First, Masters are to do justice to their servants.

Secondly, They are to correct them in their faults.

Thirdly, They are to set them good example.

Fourthly, They are to allow them means of instruction in their duty towards God, and leisure to perform their duty.

And, lastly, They are to encourage them in well-doing.

First, I say, masters are to do justice to their servants; and this justice consists in two points; first, in not exacting immoderate and unreasonable labour at their hands; and, secondly, in an honest payment of their wages.

First, You are to require no more than an equal and moderate portion of labour from your servants: unlike those cruel Egyptian task-masters, who, as the text expresses it, *made the children of Israel, to serve with rigour, and made their lives bitter with hard bondage*; and at last proceeded to that extremity of cruelty against them, that they exacted the same hard measure of work from them,

without allowing them the materials necessary to the performance of it. *Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick: let them go and gather straw for themselves; and the tale of the bricks which they did make heretofore, you shall lay upon them; you shall not diminish ought thereof; for they be idle.* — *For they be idle*; the common cry of all cruel and unmerciful masters, at the same time that their poor vassals are labouring out their lives in their drudgery. *A righteous man* (saith Solomon) *regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* A man that hath any degree of goodness or humanity, hath compassion for the beasts that perish; and, although they were made for his use, cannot bear to see them labour out their lives in pain and misery; much less can he bear to behold his own fellow-creatures, who were made in the image of God, and are, by nature, his own equals; much less can he behold them, panting and toiling to death in his own service; much less can he hasten their death, and make their *lives bitter with hard bondage*. This is the conduct of the righteous; *but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* And indeed there cannot possibly be a surer indication of abandoned corruption, of a disposition depraved to the last degree, than an hardened cruelty to those that are under our power! for he that has put off mercy, the noblest, the loveliest likeness of Almighty God here below, must, of necessity, put off all virtue and all goodness along with it. But let such wretched creatures remember that there is a God, who heareth the voice of the *poor, and the oppressed, when they cry unto him*, as he did the distressed Israelites, when they groaned beneath their bondage; there is a God that will visit their cruelty, as he did the cruelty of those merciless task-masters, with signal judgments, and severe vengeance.

I know it is a received opinion among many ignorant creatures, who are doomed to slavery, that they are never to cease from their toil in the presence of their masters. This my own experience has led me to observe; and, therefore, it is the duty of all masters, in that case, to

let them know, that they do not expect incessant labour from them; forasmuch as no constitution can bear it: and if, at any time, the necessity of their affairs requires uncommon labour and application at the hands of their servants, it is their duty to devise, to contrive, all possible relief and refreshment for them under it, as well as to allow them double relaxation after it. God knows, a state of servitude is a state wretched enough, in its best circumstances; and, therefore, a good man should endeavour to lighten the burden, and, instead of adding to the calamities of life, should make it his study, by all possible methods, to ease and relieve them, to the utmost of his power.

The next point of justice that we owe to servants is, to pay them their wages honestly.

And, if justice be rightly defined, a virtue that gives every one what of right belongs to him, the virtue is never more itself, is never practised in greater perfection, than when it is employed in payments of this kind; for if the price of servitude be not a right, what is? If a man hath not a just claim to what he has earned by the sweat of his brow, there is no such thing as a just claim in the world. And yet it is but too notorious, that many men are so regardless of justice, as well as humanity, in this point, that they do not scruple, first, to screw down their servants' wages to a poor pittance, and then defraud them of that pittance. Little regarding the solemn commands of God to the contrary, and the just judgments he has denounced against this cruel injustice. *The wages of him that is hired, saith Moses, (Levit. xix. 13.) shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.* And again, (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.) *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; at his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be a sin unto thee.* Here we see, that we should be so far from defrauding our servants of their hire, that we are not to withhold the payment of it, even for one day; for, as the text saith, *he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it.* We cannot tell how strongly his necessities

may call for it that moment; nor can we tell how much he may suffer for want of it; it is a trifle to us, but it is his all. It is the price of many long and anxious hours; and, therefore, *he setteth his heart upon it.* It is like Jacob's purchase of Rachel, dearly earned, and dearly loved: it is a happiness that cometh but seldom, and, therefore, it is inhuman to delay it; and much more to rob and defraud him entirely of it. A master, that had any humanity, would take delight to make his poor servant happy, as soon and as often as he could; and would regard the robbing the labourer of his hire, as the cruellest and and most monstrous robbery in the world. But this is not all; for oppressing the labourer in his hire, however this be done, whether by defrauding him, or delaying payment, or screwing him down to such a miserable price as will not afford him the common comforts of life, or paying him in goods, which he must sell at half-value; all these, the last of these especially, is a crying sin, and one of the cruellest oppressions that ever was heard of; and, therefore, it is no wonder, if God, by the mouth of his prophet Malachi, denounces a speedy vengeance against so much cruelty: *And I will come near to you to judgment, saith the Lord (Mal. iii. 5); and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages.* And, certainly, if we had but a moderate degree of good-nature, joined to common honesty, we should be so far from oppressing the hireling, by diminishing his just demands, that we should rather add to them: we should take delight to see our poor dependents thrive and prosper, and become happy under us. For, surely, the most glorious power and use of wealth is, to diffuse joy, and health, and happiness wherever we come. That noble emblem of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv.) should, in some measure, be that of every man of power and wealth in the world. A flourishing fortune should, in this respect, resemble a flourishing well-grown tree; as it grows great and strong, as the leaves thereof are fair, so should the fruit thereof be much; and it should

be *meat for many* ; these are its noblest uses ; to relieve and to refresh, to protect from storm and tempest, and project a salutary shade and shelter all around it. And yet some of the great trees of our earth are, in the very reverse of this character, of so malignant an influence, that they keep down and kill all that come under them ; and, for that reason, should, like the fruitless tree in the gospel, be *cut down* ; *why cumbereth it the ground* ? And, indeed, it may but too truly be said of them, not only, *why cumbereth*, but also *why curseth* it the ground ? And, no doubt, in the just judgments of Almighty God, they are oftentimes not only *cut down* for that reason, *but also cast into the fire*.

The second duty masters owe their servants is, to correct them in their faults ; and this they are to do, not in such violence, and heat of passion, as may unsettle their reason, and carry their correction to excess ; nor yet with such a stoic calmness, as might make it be mistaken for deliberate cruelty ; but with a temperate degree of just and reasonable resentment, and such as may convince their servants of the evil and error of their conduct. For servants are at all times apt enough to imagine, their masters only correct them to gratify their own ill-nature, or ill-humour, without any regard to their amendment ; and, therefore, some pains should be taken to remove this prejudice, and to satisfy our servants, that our reproofs are meant for their good ; and that we take much more pleasure in seeing them do their duty as they ought, than in punishing them for the neglect of it. And this will make the duty of servants to their masters, like the duty of mankind to Almighty God, at once an happy, and a reasonable service. But, if this will not do, as God knows, many of them are insensible to all rational methods of conviction, then sharper and severer methods are to be made use of ; and, indeed, some servants are of such rough and intractable dispositions, so haughty, and so hardened, that they are not to be subdued otherwise than as we are told a great captain subdued rocks by fire and vinegar. But, although severity be necessary sometimes, care should be taken never to use it, but

when it is necessary ; and, therefore, that teasing vexatious humour of some masters is carefully to be avoided, that dwells eternally upon a fault, and delights in perpetual taunts and insults, upon the conduct and character of such as are in subjection to them. This, as it is hateful and inhuman, so likewise it is a servile disposition ; and is a sure argument of an abject mean mind.

But to proceed.

The point where servants have most need of correction and admonition, and yet meet with least of it, is in relation to their duty to God. Men are apt enough to chastise neglect and error in the conduct of their servants, as far as it regards their own concerns ; but the concerns of Almighty God, the interest of religion and virtue, are of less moment with them. And yet, in reality, the dishonour done to Almighty God, and the eternal ruin of the meanest mortal, consequent to that dishonour, are, in themselves, of infinitely more importance than all the concerns of this world put together. Will any loss of this world bear any comparison with the loss of an immortal soul ! or any mortal gain weigh against that of saving a soul alive ! And, therefore, when masters are immediately on fire for every transgression and neglect of their own will and pleasure, and, at the same time, cold and unmoved at the greatest enormities against the righteous and unerring will of God ; it is a sure sign that they have great regard to their own interest, and very little for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. And, indeed, this is the great and crying complaint in the conduct of masters ! their utter disregard of the religion and virtue of their servants ! And, to this lamentable neglect, so extensive and universal, is owing the present general corruption among the lower part of mankind. It is notorious, that servants are, at this day, the most abandoned and profligate part of the creation ! and, when these marry, or, which is much more frequent, become parents by their crimes, their wretched issue are brought up without any sense of conscience, or fear of God ; for how should they inspire any sense of religion into their children, who are utterly void of it them-

selves? And thus the lower part of mankind go on from ignorance to iniquity, and are, at this moment, arrived to such an unspeakable degree of corruption as is amazing to behold, and dreadful to think of; such as were sufficient to draw down God's heaviest judgments upon the land; so that we may cry out against this nation, as Isaiah does against the Jews, in the first chapter of his prophecy, *Ah ! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters ! They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger ; they are gone away backward.* And to what is all this abomination, all this dreadful mass of iniquity, so justly to be ascribed, as to the neglect of masters? Their conniving at the profaneness and irreligion of their servants, and entirely neglecting, either to exhort them to virtue and goodness, or to oblige them to a constant attendance upon the service of God. And, surely, masters of families would never be so careless in an affair of this consequence, did they consider what a severe account they shall give of this conduct at the last. All masters of families are governors and rulers in their own houses; and it is the duty of rulers to watch over the conduct of all persons under their care; especially those parts of it that are of the last consequence to them; and, therefore, as all rulers should be the *ministers of God for good*, so should they likewise be a *terror to evil works*. That this was David's sense of the matter, appears from the 101st Psalm, where he solemnly professes, that he will employ none but the righteous in his service, and will not allow any wicked persons to be parts of his family. *He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house. He that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.* And, as this is the duty of all masters, as much as it was David's, so likewise is it no less their interest; and this upon two accounts; first, with regard to their children; and, secondly, with regard to their fortune.

First, With regard to their children; for, as few parents have leisure, or are able wholly to take care of their children themselves, there is often a neces-

sity of committing them to the care of servants; and it is certain, that, according as those servants are either wicked or well-inclined, the child is early initiated, either in the ways of virtue, or in the ways of vice; and, as earlier habits last longer, and are harder to be defaced, if parents have any regard either to the happiness of their children in this world, or their salvation in the next, nothing ought to be of nearer concern to them than to commit them to the care of virtuous and religious servants in their tender years.

As to the other point, surely nothing can be more the interest of all masters of families, than that all their servants should make a conscience of their business, and should perform all parts of their duty to them *in singleness of heart, as unto Christ*. And therefore, the sure way to make them good servants, is to make them good men and good Christians; and the sure way to make them good Christians is, besides what hath been already urged, to shew them good example, which was the third thing I proposed to speak to.

Masters should set their servants a good example. Example sways the whole world, and either ruins or reforms it, as it is good or evil! as kingdoms are influenced by the example of the prince, and armies by the example of their captains, and all societies of men by such as have authority over them; families naturally fall into the imitation of their fathers, and servants are led insensibly into the manners of their masters. A good example is like a light set up on high, to guide mankind in the ways of salvation and truth; and, therefore, our blessed Saviour commands his disciples, and in them all Christians, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*. The light of a good life is, indeed, a silent, but it is at the same time a strong, a living, and almost an irresistible exhortation to goodness; its native beauty attracts the love and admiration of all that behold it; and what men admire, they imitate. And if good example hath force enough to draw men to the imitation of it, alas! ill example hath yet a stronger and mightier influ-

ence; it prevails even against exhortation and instruction; and it is vain for an ill man to exhort to virtue and goodness as long as his practice contradicts his precepts; for it is much easier to ruin by example than to reform by precept; as it is far easier to pull down than to build up. And, therefore, it is vain for a lewd, a profane, an idle, and drunken master to expect a modest, a sober, an industrious, and a pious family. And, indeed, how can a wicked master so much as expect that a servant should be faithful to him, for the little pittance he receives from him, when he himself is so notoriously ungrateful and unfaithful to God, in return for all the blessings of life? If you expect your servants should be honest and good men, let them see you go to church constantly, and behave yourselves with becoming humility and devotion when you are there; let them see you act honestly and conscientiously in all your dealings; let them not observe you habitually careless to retire into your closet to your morning and evening devotions; or rather (not merely to insist upon negative goodness, or ceasing to do evil) let them observe you religiously careful to call your whole family together, to join with you in the worship of God; let them never hear a loose expression, a rash oath, or a profane jest out of your mouths; *Let your light so shine before them, that they may see your good works*, and then will they be naturally led to *glorify your Father which is in heaven*. And, surely, there cannot be a more lovely, there cannot be so lovely, so glorious an employment in life, as that of leading in the ways of salvation and truth, and conducting to eternal happiness. *Captain of our salvation*, is the most glorious title that ever was conferred even upon the Son of God! and, if so, certainly the contrary to all this, the conductor to vice and villainy, the leader to death and destruction, is the dreadfullest employment, as well as the most hateful character in life.

But, fourthly, as masters are to admonish servants in the ways of their duty, and to set them good example, so likewise are they to allow them means of instruction, and leisure to perform their duty towards God. And this may be

done at small expence, both of time and money, by allowing every member of your family a Bible and Prayer-book, together with the Whole Duty of Man; and, if that be too great an expence, allowing one of each to the family in common. And, as the rates of these excellent books are, by the pious charity of some good men, reduced very low, this is an expence that most families can well bear; or, if any are yet so poor as not to be able to go to this small expence, I am satisfied that, by a modest application to their parish minister, such an invaluable treasure might be easily obtained; and, when it is obtained, a very small portion of leisure allowed to the servants for reading and contemplation, at proper seasons, will be sufficient for their instruction in that which should be the great business of life, their duty both to God and man; and this may be done on holidays, and other seasons of leisure; or, if an hour or two were now and then allowed to servants for this very purpose, as an extraordinary reward of diligence, possibly it might turn to very good account. And, be assured, one hour thus employed will bring a blessing upon all the rest. Or, if this be more than the necessary business of your calling will allow, (as I am satisfied it is not,) the Sabbath is the Lord's; let that, at least, be allowed your servants, for their instruction in the ways of salvation and life; and let it not only be allowed, but see that it also be employed in hearing of sermons, and attending upon the public worship of God; and, above all, take care they are not withheld from the service of God, by being employed in the service of your luxury, vices, and vanities, as is too often the case of cooks and coachmen! and, if they are sometimes withheld by the necessary duties of their place, be it your care to see those omissions made up by a diligent attendance at other seasons.

The last duty of masters is to encourage their servants in well-doing.

Rewards and punishments are the great springs and wheels that set the whole world in motion; there is hardly any thing to be done in life without the aid of one or both of these. And forasmuch as there is a pride in human na-

ture that often sets itself against correction, and is restive to reproofs, but pliant and yielding to the least expressions of kindness, it is frequently found, that applause and encouragement have more influence upon us than correction and punishment. Pride is like the rust that seizes and stiffens the spring of an engine, and checks its motion, so that no force can set it to work; but kindness is like oil, which smooths and supple the machine in such a manner that the parts move of themselves. And this gentle method of dealing with our fellow creatures is God's own method of dealing with mankind; who, we are assured, *doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; who delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live*; and chooses rather to lead us to repentance by his goodness, than to drive us to it by his wrath. And, as prudence and humanity prompt us to take this method of exciting our servants to duty, so justice and equity require, that when they have excelled in it they should be rewarded and encouraged to the utmost of our power; for the same motives that excited them to excel are the best engagements upon them to continue in well-doing. And, God knows, when a servant is truly faithful and diligent in the discharge of his duty, all the encouragement in our power is justly due to him. And, to speak reasonably upon this head, when a man lays out his whole time and care in our service, and makes it the study and business of his life to consult our happiness and our interest, how can such a servant be too much encouraged? or rather, how can he be rewarded enough?

And yet, after all, I am sensible there is one objection to this doctrine, which I do not well know how to get over; and that is, that the greater part of servants will not bear to be encouraged, but are wont to grow so insolent, as soon as their masters have shewn any uncommon regard to them, that they immediately become intolerable, not only to their fellow-servants, but even to their masters themselves. For it is the nature of servile spirits to be either low and creeping, to a fault; or imperious and proud, be-

yond bearing; as I, in truth, I am at a loss what to say upon this head, or what method of conduct to prescribe in relation to such dispositions as these, unless we imitate the conduct of Almighty God, who *resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly*. If servants always found that they constantly rose in their master's favour in proportion to their modesty and humility, and, on the other hand, found that every degree of pride threw them into as great a degree of disgrace, this, joined to proper instruction and admonition, would probably have happy effects upon their dispositions. But, in truth, the great evil, which is the foundation of all this pride and perverseness, is the want of a right sense of religion and virtue. If they once knew that humility would make them amiable in the sight of God and man, and that pride would render them detestable to both, they would soon study to obtain the one, and to avoid the other; would earnestly seek after *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price*; and, above all, they would remember these two fine observations of Solomon, one in the 29th chapter of his Proverbs, and the other in the 16th chapter: *A man's pride shall bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*. And these proverbs I would recommend to all servants to bear about them, like jewels of inestimable value, and repeat them with their prayers, as the surest charms, not only to preserve them in their places, but likewise keep them in favour both with God and man.

But there are two instances of encouragement, which I have not yet mentioned; and those are, the regard that should be had to the merits of a good servant in the last wills of the masters, and when the servant is past his labour.

As to the first of these: Forasmuch as the small pittance which is paid to servants, under the name of wages, is, God knows, but a poor reward for fidelity and diligence, it is the duty of a master to remember a good servant in his last will; to make the best provision he can for him, against that time when it will be no longer in his power either to reward

his fidelity or relieve his wants; and, therefore, I would have a dutiful and conscientious servant always considered in the next degree to a dutiful child, and before a child that was undutiful; agreeably to the wise man's rule, (Prov. xvii. 20.) *A wise servant shall bear rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance.*

As to the second point; to wit, the regard due to a servant when he is past his labour; I think there cannot be a greater instance of cruelty and inhumanity, than to suffer an aged servant, who hath spent the vigour of his youth and health in our service, to be reduced to misery and want, when his infirmities have disabled him from further labour. Humanity would prompt us to take some care, even of a brute, in the same circumstances; for a brute, that had laboured out his strength in our service, that he might not want pasture and shelter for the poor remains of his life; and, surely, much more should it oblige us to take some care of our poor fellow-creatures, of an aged and a faithful servant, in the decline of life. Methinks I hear the old servant crying out to his master in this condition, as David doth to his God in the 71st Psalm; *Cast me not away in the time of age; forsake me not when my strength faileth me.*

The cases of sickness, or accidental loss of limbs, in our service, which disabled from labour, fall also under this head; and are rather more calamitous than the case of old age; and, consequently, call at least for equal compassion and humanity at our hands; and, therefore, the cruelty of those masters is never to be forgiven, who make the misery and misfortunes of their servants, reasons for casting them off. With what face can such creatures cry out to God in their own calamity, as David doth in his distress, *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate, and in misery! O: go not far from me; for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me.* Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye merciful, as your Father, which is in heaven, is merciful, and fail not to shew all the pity and compassion to your poor servants which you yourselves hope for, and will have need of, at

the hand of God, your great Lord and Master.

And thus I have done with the several branches of the duty of masters to their servants; and have shewed, I hope, to your satisfaction, first, That you are to do justice to them in paying them their wages punctually and honestly, and not laying more labour upon them than they are able to bear.

Secondly, That you are to correct them in their faults; and that in such a manner as is most likely to avail for their amendment, especially such faults as are committed against the law of God; such as lying, swearing, profaneness, lewdness, and all vices and immoralities whatsoever; and this you must do, as well for their salvation-sake, as also to guard your children from the infection of their manners, who, if your servants are corrupt, will hardly escape being tainted by them.

Thirdly, I shewed you, that you were obliged to set your servants good examples, by honesty and conscience in all your dealings, and by an exemplary life of piety and virtue.

Fourthly, That you were to allow them proper means of instruction in their duty to God and man; the use of Bibles, and other books of devotion, and a proper portion of time to peruse them; the Sabbath, especially set apart for this end, is not only freely to be allowed them, but care is to be taken that it be employed by them in hearing sermons, and attending upon the public worship of God.

And, in the last place, as you are to correct your servants in vice and error, so are you to encourage them in well-doing; to support them when they are past their labour; and make the best provision you can for them at your death: and the consequence from all this will be, that your lives will be easier, and your business be infinitely better done, than otherwise they ever would, or ever will be.

And now, my brethren, if ye know, all these parts of your duty, *happy are ye, if you do them.*

And, indeed, you ought to do them from the sole motive mentioned in my text, knowing, *that ye also have a Master in heaven, neither is there respect of*

persons with him. The little temporary distinctions of lord and master are calculated only for this world ; for, in the world to come, all titles shall vanish, and all distinctions cease, and mankind shall be reduced to their original equality : high and low, rich and poor, the master and the servant, all shall be summoned before the great tribunal of God ! all shall appear alike, without precedence, and without distinction, other than what their merit shall give them in the sight of God : with regard to every thing else, equal, as in the grave they rose from.

Good God ! how strangely, how entirely, and how sadly will the state of things here below be reversed and changed at the great day of account ! when the mighty men of the earth shall be stript of all their ornaments and honours, and the title of *good and faithful servant* shall be the highest and noblest distinction ! Then shall the sons of vanity see themselves reduced to a level with their meanest slaves ; and not only so, but shall see some of those slaves placed high above them. How will their proud hearts be mortified, to behold those poor wretches, wretches whom they would now scarce vouchsafe to look down upon, exalted to high degrees of honour and eminence, and themselves reduced to the lowest condition of misery and contempt ! so low, that those very slaves shall pity them ! so low, as, perhaps, to beg a small charity from the meanest of their creatures ; as the rich man in the Gospel, who *was clothed in purple, and fared sumptuously every day*, was reduced to beg relief by the hand of that wretched creature, whose *sores the dogs licked at his gate* ! to beg, that *Abraham would send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in cold water, to cool his tongue*. How many haughty masters will be reduced to the like sad estate at the last day ; suing to their slaves, and suing, as he did, to be denied ; and receiving, instead of relief, the same severe return, *Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things, and this, thy slave, evil things, at thy hands ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented !*

Therefore, my beloved brethren, let

you loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord. Oh ! set not your hearts upon the little temporary distinctions of lord and master, but remember that *your Master is also in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with him*. Remember, that the meanest slave upon earth is upon the same foot of natural equality, and of equal acceptance in the sight of God, with the mightiest monarch in the universe : all equally the sons of God, and heirs of everlasting salvation. What are all the wealth and power of this world upon which we so vainly value ourselves ? What are they but great stewardships, of which the owners shall give a severe account at the last day ? What then is the great business of life, but to provide, that we may behave ourselves so in this account, that, at the last, we may be found in the character of that faithful and wise steward in the Gospel, *whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give their portion of meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. But, if that servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink, and be drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware ; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

From which dreadful and intolerable doom, God, of his great mercy, deliver all that hear me ; through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour. Amen.

S E R M O N CXXII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The Duty of paying Debts.

ROM. xiii. part of verse 8.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.

THE apostle, having in the foregoing verse enjoined us to render to every one

their dues—*Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour*; subjoins as an enforcement of the same precept in other terms—*Owe no man any thing*. He first expresseth the precept positively; *Render to every one their dues*; and then, to enforce it yet stronger, he varies his phrase, and lays down the same precept a second time, in negative terms—*Owe no man any thing—Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*; i. e. discharge every engagement, every obligation you are under, to every man, in every relation of life; take care you owe no man any thing but love and good-will; for that is a debt, which, though you always pay, yet you will always owe; that is an obligation that never ends but with your life.

The precept here delivered is general, and extends to every instance of social virtue; but the business of this discourse shall be to apply it to one particular duty, which is as little practised, and perhaps less taught, than any other; I mean the duty of paying debts; a duty of as great consequence to the well-being of society, as any other whatsoever; as comprehending under it one great and important branch of commutative justice; and yet as utterly and as openly disregarded, as if neither the laws of God, nor man, nor nature exacted it of us. And therefore, to awaken you into a right sense of this duty, I shall consider the evils that attend the neglect of it, both as they regard the debtor, and as they regard the creditor.

And, first, with regard to the debtor.—Nothing is more manifest than that carelessness in contracting debts, and negligence in discharging them, is one of the most unhappy characters in life, and such as draws more evils after it, than can well be counted or conceived; that spirit, as it is the effect, so it is the cause of extravagance. Money borrowed is so much clear gains to a thoughtless mortal that has nothing but the gratification of his pleasures at heart; and with how much more ease, and less interruption, this may be done, the better. The consequences of such a conduct are reflections, which can only proceed from that wisdom which they openly despise, or

are utterly incapable of. This, of necessity, gives them up a prey to the artifices of wily villains, that lie in wait to deceive; for there are those in the world whose whole business and purpose of life is to watch and to feed the follies of such extravagants: they give by ounces, that they may receive by pounds. They are in the condition of the husbandman, who commits his seed to the earth, in prospect of a good harvest, greater or less, according to the richness of the soil. They well know that the persons they deal with are bad computers, and worse accomplices; and therefore nothing is more easy than to impose upon them in the value of what they vend, or the quantity of what they receive. And if they should at any time happen to be restive, and suspect they are defrauded, the men of the world know very well how to bring them down again to their own terms: they manage them as skilful warriors subdue strong towns; they starve them into compliance: they know it is but holding their hand, and refusing to feed their extravagance, to make them subscribe to any conditions they think fit to impose.

How far do these ^{ye} men outdo the folly of Esau! He sold ^{inst} his birthright to gratify a real and craving want, and yet he sinned in selling it; but these men sacrifice theirs to such wants as are false and fantastic; to appetites that will not be satisfied, or at least ought not to be indulged: nay, they oftentimes sacrifice their health, as well as their inheritance, even to wantonness and fulness. The truth of it is, men of this character are, for the most part, in a worse condition than that of Solomon's horse-leech, that *hath two daughters, crying, Give, give*. Wine and women, play and pleasure, are the daughters of the horse-leech, less limited in their number, but not less craving, wasting, and insatiable; and whoever suffers them to fasten on him is effectually undone. If men contracted debts for the necessities of life, which they could no otherwise procure, they were excuseable; but to purchase needless, nay perhaps pernicious vanities, at the hazard of health, and fortune, and liberty; at the hazard of every thing that is good and valuable in life, is folly past

forgiveness: and yet if it were only a folly, it might be borne with. But, in truth, this habit of running thoughtlessly into debt draws many other worse habits after it: lying, swearing, cheating, and all kinds of vice and villainy are its sure attendants; nay, sometimes, even murder, as hath been seen in more than one unhappy and dreadful instance. It is like that evil spirit in the Gospel, who, when he hath gotten possession, taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; *and the last state of that man is unspeakably worse than the first.*

A spirit of extravagance, long used to be indulged, cannot bear to be restrained or refused: and if it may not be gratified in the usual way, yet gratified it must be, at any rate. If credit be checked in the common course, new channels must be cut, and new sources opened; and this must be the work of falsehood and fraud, and every wicked artifice that can be devised. By this means the mind becomes corrupt and depraved to the last degree, and the man is gradually fitted for the conversation of fiends. Nay, this sin is as stupid with regard to this world as other sins are with regard to the next; it sacrifices all the solid and lasting satisfactions even of this life, to small, present, momentary gratifications, without the least thought of the dreadful consequences that await them; and it ends, even in this world, as other vices do in the next, in the loss of liberty and happiness, and the calamities of a dreadful confinement among cursed spirits: for a gaol is, indeed, another hell upon earth, and the best emblem of that mansion of misery; where you are surrounded with nothing but sin and affliction; where abandoned wretches become yet more abandoned by society and example; by the conversation of miscreants more vile than themselves; by mixing with the most corrupt and profligate part of mankind; inflaming their past guilt by new and greater enormities every day; living in utter defiance of God and goodness: and, for the most part, dying either in a hardened impenitence, or the horrors of despair. And yet this is the end to which the young, the gay, the

pleasurable part of mankind are hurrying on, with as much eagerness, as if they thought it impossible ever to be attained too soon. And, indeed, if this were only the pursuit of youthful folly, the evil were in some degree to be endured, because age and experience would be sure to abate it; but, in truth, it is often the vice of every age, and every condition in life—wherever pride and vanity reign, there extravagant aims are pursued, and fantastic distinctions sought after, at the hazard of every felicity and security in life. Turn your eyes upon the world, and you will behold one half of mankind living apparently above their fortune; and what is living above their fortune, but living to sure destruction, both of themselves and family, as well as all those they deal with? One man is above making use of the limbs which God hath bestowed upon him, to convey him where his business calls; and so rides in a coach for a few months, at the hazard of wanting shoes for the rest of his life, when his folly hath reduced him to his feet.

Another, who hath wherewithal to purchase a house, every way convenient and suited to his circumstances, cannot be content without magnificence, and rooms of state, which are of no use, but to be looked at: these are not to be attained without a foreign fund; and, just when the building is at the point of being finished, his creditors come and take possession of it, and he and his family are turned out of doors—and, perhaps, without clothes enough to cover their nakedness, or hide their shame; it may be, too, without knowing how to be sheltered from the inclemency of the weather, or where to seek for a morsel of bread. This is oftener the case, in effect, though not exactly in the circumstances now mentioned, than is commonly imagined; nor are the instances few or rare, of persons utterly undone by living beyond their fortune. In this condition, abandoned at once by their friends, and by the fund or income by which they subsisted, deserted by every thing but their pride, whither shall the unhappy wretches turn themselves? Their vanity sets them above all honest industry in a low way; for that, for the

most part, remains with them like a running sore that drains their vitals : and either urge them to starve in an honourable way, or drive them to violent and desperate courses for subsistence, till they end in infamy. And although such a creature is little to be pitied upon his own account, yet is his fall often to be lamented, on account of many others that are involved in his ruin. An honest friend that was drawn in to be bound for him, and is undone by his munificence : or an innocent family that were too young to be partners in his folly, and yet must share his fate, and are given up by it to prostitution or poverty ; or an honest and kind parent, who expended more than he could well afford, to bring his son with more advantage into the world : perhaps, too, a virtuous and valuable woman, innocent of his pride, and yet crushed in his fall ; though, it is to be hoped, this rarely happens, the wife being too often the great incentive to the husband's vanity ; and, of consequence, less to be lamented in the ruin in which she is involved. These, and a thousand such like calamities, are the necessary and unavoidable consequences of profusion and extravagance ; of carelessness in contracting debts, and negligence in discharging them ; these are the evils which thoughtless mortals draw upon their own heads, and those of their nearest friends, by vanity and unthrift. And yet, great and various as these are, they are few and inconsiderable, in comparison of those brought upon the rest of mankind by the same cursed spirit.

Every one knows that the whole business of trade, by which nations grow great and happy, is carried on by men of diligence and industry, of fortunes, for the most part, too small (at least, at their first setting out) to support them in indolence ; and that their profit arises principally from quick returns. It is plain, from hence, that running in debt with tradesmen, and neglecting to pay them in due time, is utterly ruinous to the whole business of trade and commerce ; and absolutely destructive of the very principles upon which it is built, and by which it subsists ; and yet this is a crime every day committed by men of fortune and

quality, with as little remorse as they eat and drink ; and, if the tradesman demands his money, it is odds but he is either threatened, or turned into a jest : the son of Sirach's wise observation is here every day verified ; *The rich man hath done wrong, and yet he threateneth ; the poor is wronged, and yet he must entreat also.* If threats will not rid these men of their importunate creditors, then are they to be deluded with fair words, and plausible excuses, to pay attendance from day to day, to the loss of more time, and neglect of more business, than perhaps the debt is worth ; and so the first injury, instead of being repaired, is doubled. And yet the gentleman debtor, the author of this evil, is so far from repenting of it, that it is odds but he vaunts his wit and dexterity in doing it. *As a madman (saith Solomon) who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death ; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, am I not in jest ?*—And, indeed, it is scarce to be conceived how any man can deal more destruction and ruin around him, than by deceiving and breaking faith with the fair trader ; for it is well known, his credit, his whole subsistence, depends upon keeping his word, and being strictly punctual in his payments and his promises ; and, if he fail in these, he is undone at once. And how is it possible he should not fail, if the gentleman he deals with fail him ? He hath no way of raising money but by sale of his goods ; and, if those to whom they are trusted will not pay him, it is impossible he can pay his creditors ; and, if he do not pay them, it is impossible but he must be ruined, and, perhaps, many more with him. For traders are linked and dependent of one another ; and one man's fall throws down many more with him : the shopkeeper is in debt to the maker or the merchant ; and these again to the journeyman, the farmer, or the foreign correspondent ; and so the ruin becomes complicated, and extended beyond imagination ; insomuch that the failure of one man here may affect many others in the remotest regions of the earth ; may reach at once from west to east, and from east to west again ; and yet the fine gentleman, that thus *scattereth firebrands, arrows, and death around*

him, shall cry, with great complacency to himself, and, perhaps, with great applause from his companions, *Am I not in jest?* shall pride himself in having imposed upon the credulity of an industrious honest man, (with the added insolence of a contemptuous name,) and appointed him to come for payment the next day after he is gone out of town. And, after all, to what purpose all this fraud, and falsehood, and delusion! none in nature, but to have wherewithal to feed their folly and extravagance; to have to throw away upon a horse, or an harlot; or to pay a play debt—debts of honour as they are called, but, in truth, debts of infamy! debts, which it was infamous to contract, and which it is villainous to pay, to the injury of the honest trader. A gamester, a sharper, that undoes you with false dice, or sleight of hand; a wretch, whom it is a scandal to converse or so much as to be seen with, such a miscreant shall be paid off, though to your utter ruin: every engagement, every security in life, shall be sacrificed to discharge him; whilst the fair dealer that supplied you with the necessities of life is left to rot in a gaol, for the food that fed you, and the clothes that covered you. Can any thing be conceived more monstrous? or is it possible to imagine how human nature can be sunk into a greater degree of corruption than this?

These are the practices of the loose and libertine part of mankind; and, indeed, what better can be expected from that vicious and thoughtless extravagance in which they live? But there is also another race of men, opposite to these in all other respects, who agree perfectly with them, in not paying their debts, and yet are much more criminal on that score; I mean the needy and covetous rich, who cannot pay, either because they have made a new purchase, or because they will not break a sum for which they receive interest. A greedy purchaser is one that will run in debt with all mankind; and, if he can help it, will pay for nothing but houses or lands; nay, by his good will, he will not pay for these, otherwise than by the profits that arise from them. The thoughtless libertine is a man that spends

more than he hath, and therefore cannot pay; the greedy purchaser is a man that spends nothing, and hath a great deal, and will not pay, because he would have more: these are the greatest monsters in nature; compositions of covetousness and cruelty! who oppress and distress every one they have to deal with; who will pay no man themselves, and yet suffer no mortal to owe them a penny; they rack their tenants, and grind the face of the poor; *they drive away the ass of the fatherless,* (saith Job,) *and take the widow's ox for a pledge; they cause the naked to lodge without clothing, and they have no covering in the cold; they are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for shelter: men group from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out.* These men are the pest of society, and infinitely worse than robbers upon the high roads: they rob, not from necessity, but from the insolence of power and plenty! in the spirit of calm cruelty and determined villainy! and, to complete their character, they rob oftentimes even under the shew of friendship, with impunity, and without remorse: neither can you guard against them; neither can you bring them to justice when you are injured. And here the condition of the creditor is indeed deplorable; if the tradesman be importunate for his money, he is sure to disoblige; if it be kept from him for a considerable time, he must of necessity be a great loser, because he is deprived of the advantage of turning it in trade all that while. Whereas, if it had been paid him when it ought, he might reasonably hope to have doubled it before that day. And yet, as the case now stands, he has not the advantage of receiving so much as the common interest for it; nay, not only so, but if he lets it lie above a certain number of years, he loses the principal. It is to be presumed, that one reason why the law allows no interest for book-debts, is, because the trader cannot afford to let his money lie out so long as to derive any advantage from it by way of interest; for the interest of money is but a trifle, in comparison of the advantages it may turn to in trade; and therefore the law, to lay tradesmen under a

necessity of calling in their money betimes, allows them no interest for it while it is out. But still the difficulty remains how to call it in, since every one knows that the expences of a law-suit may very easily exceed the debt; and, at best, you must of necessity be a loser even by gaining your cause. If indeed the law, at the same time that it prohibited book-debts from bearing interest, had contrived some cheap and easy method of recovering those debts, tradesmen had been well dealt by; but to take away the interest of their debts, and the principal, after some years, and yet leave them no way of doing themselves justice, but at the hazard of their ruin, hath the appearance of great hardship. For, besides the excessive expence of law-suits, the ill-will that such an attempt is sure to draw upon the tradesman is a weight which few men of that rank are able to bear. The man he goes to law with, and all his friends and dependents, are sure to become his mortal enemies from that moment. The debtor, in that case, seems to think himself obliged to abuse the tradesman, and blast his credit as much as in him lies, to justify himself in using him so ill; and blasting a tradesman's credit is the sure way to ruin him at once. It is finely observed of an excellent writer, that credit is to the tradesman what honour is to the gentleman; to a man that is truly such, his honour is as dear as his life; to the trader, credit is as life itself, for he cannot live without it. Few of you would knowingly and deliberately involve yourselves in the guilt of murder; and yet you effectually do this, when you blast the reputation of an honest dealer; for defamnation is death to such a one; his bread depends upon his credit, and if he be robbed of it he must starve; and, certainly, stabbing a man to the heart is a much less cruelty than starving him to death. Nay, you are as cruel to your own honour in this case as you are to the tradesman's credit and life; for honour is a strict and nice regard to every virtue in life, and more particularly to truth and justice. And therefore a man of honour that is neither true nor honest, is a contradiction in terms; a man that allows himself in any degree of fraud or falsehood has actually

degraded himself from his dignity, and has no more title to the honour than he has to the estate he has forfeited.

But, suppose the tradesman's reputation so well established as to bear up against the load of calumny that is thrown upon him on these occasions; suppose him able to bear the double burden of calumny and a law-suit; yet what will all this avail him? The debtor is a peer, or a parliament-man, or protected by those that are; his person is privileged, and his estate settled; and, if neither of these will do, he bids defiance to the very execution of the law; and you attempt it at the hazard of your life. These are the difficulties that shopkeepers and men in business are forced to struggle with, and too often sink under: and if, in the number of so many bad paymasters as they have to deal with some should be so far touched with compassion or remorse, as not only to discharge what they owe, but likewise to pay interest for it, beyond the obligation of the law, this is reckoned an uncommon mark of liberality and Christian heroism; whereas, in truth, a dealer that is kept out of his money a considerable time, hath no sufficient reparation made him by being paid both the principal and the interest in the end; because both together will be far from amounting to the profit he might reasonably propose to have made by it in trade all that time. For sure no man in his wits would run all the hazards and troubles of trade, who could propose to make as much advantage by the common interest of money as he might expect from dealing with it. And this is a new reason why men should be careful to pay tradesmen in time: because though no accident should hinder you from paying them in the end, yet your clearing off the original debt, together with the legal interest which that sum ought to bear, is far from doing justice to the tradesman, for the damage he has suffered in being kept out of his money so long. So that, when you think you have made him ample amends for detaining what was due to him, you have in truth injured him.

And thus I have endeavoured to lay before you the several evils that arise from running thoughtlessly into debt, and from

delaying to pay when it is in our power. And yet this is a vice so universally practised, and so little thought of in the world, that I cannot quit the subject without making some application of what has been said, to all orders and degrees of men that allow themselves in it.

SERMON CXXIII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The same Subject continued.

ROM. xiii. part of verse 8.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.

IN a former discourse upon these words, I laid down the duty of paying debts, together with the evils which attend the neglect of it, both as they regard the debtor, and as they regard the creditor. The evils to the debtor, of being imposed upon either in the quantity or value of what they take up upon trust; and the great evil of making expence easy, and, in consequence of that, ruin insensible and inevitable. To the creditor, the delay of payment in due time draws endless inconveniences and evils after it; loss of time, and trade, and credit, and, in consequence of these, inevitable, and, it may be, extensive and complicated ruin. I now proceed to make some application of what has been said, to all orders and degrees of men that allow themselves in the violation or neglect of this duty. And, first, let me ask the thoughtless spendthrift once again, what can be the consequence of his running in debt with all the world, but utter ruin both to himself and others? If the persons you deal with are honest and indigent, how can you answer it to your humanity, to bring misery and destruction upon the most pitiable and most deserving part of the creation? to destroy those by your extravagance, which even cruelty and tyranny would be tender of? What is most provoking, and indeed insufferable upon this head, is, that those who allow themselves in this conduct often pass upon the world under the character of good natured men; and you shall often

hear it said of such a one, that he is nobody's enemy but his own. But the real truth is, that every vicious man, whatever he may be in his intentions, is, in effect, an enemy to the society he lives in; and more particularly a vicious good-nature is one of the cruellest characters in life. It is kind only where it ought not: it is kind to every vice and every villainy; it is indulgent to every thing but honesty and innocence; and those it is sure to sacrifice wherever it comes. A good-natured villain will surfeit a sot, and gorge a glutton; nay, will glut his horses and his hounds with that food for which the venders are one day to starve to death in a dungeon; a good-natured monster will be gay in the spoils of widows and orphans. Good-nature, separated from virtue, is absolutely the worst quality and character in life; at least, if this be good-nature, to feed a dog, and to murder a man. And therefore, if you have any pretence to good-nature, pay your debts; and, in so doing, clothe those poor families that are now in rags for your finery; feed him that is starving for the bread you eat, and redeem him from misery that rots in gaol, for the dainties on which you *fared deliciously every day*. And, besides the good you will do to others by those acts of honesty, you will do infinite good to yourselves by them. Paying of debts is, next to the grace of God, the best means in the world to deliver you from a thousand temptations to sin and vanity. Pay your debts, and you will not have wherewithal to purchase a costly toy, or a pernicious pleasure. Pay your debts, and you will not have what to lose to a villainous gamester. Pay your debts, and you will not have wherewithal to feed a number of useless horses, or infectious harlots. In one word, pay your debts, and you will, of necessity *abstain from many fleshly lusts that war against the spirit, and bring you into captivity to sin*, and cannot fail to end in your utter destruction, both of soul and body.

On the other hand, if the men you deal with, and are indebted to, are rich and wily, consider they supply your extravagance with no other view but to undo you; as men pour water into a pump, to draw more from it. Consider,

they could not afford to trust you, if they did not propose to make excessive gain by you; and if you think at all, think what it is to lose a fortune by folly; to purchase superfluous and pernicious vanities, for a short season, at the hazard of wanting necessities for the tedious remainder of a mis-spent life. Time, which sweetens all other afflictions, will perpetually sharpen and inflame this; as the gaiety and giddiness of youth go off, the wants of age will become more sharp, and more inconsolable, to the last day of your lives; and severe reflection will double every calamity that befalls you. And therefore the son of Sirach well advises, (Ecclus. xviii. 33.) *Be not made a beggar by banqueting upon borrowing; for thou shalt lie in wait for thy own life.* And again, the same wise man most excellently observes, *That he that buildeth his house with other men's money, is like one that gathereth himself stones for the tomb of his burial; he erects a sure monument, not only of his folly, but of his ruin; and the consequence is the same from extravagance of every kind; but with this difference, that the ruin derived from wine and women is the most dreadful of all others; as it involves you at once in the double distress of disease and want. Who amongst you can at once bear the united racks of hunger, and infection, and an evil conscience; and yet this is what you must feel, although it be what you cannot bear; the torments of hell anticipated! to be deprived of every blessing, and to be immersed in misery.*

Thus much for the youthful extravagant. In the next place, let me apply myself to the man of quality, that is guilty of this vice, although these are too often the same persons. If ye will not consider what ye owe your creditors, and how to pay them, I beseech you calmly to reflect and consider what ye owe to yourselves, to your family, to your country, to your king. Was it for this that ye were distinguished above others of the same rank, only to be more eminent in infamy? Was nobility bestowed upon your ancestors as a reward of virtue; and do ye use it only as a privilege for vice? Is superior worth de-

generated into superior villainy? If ye had any remains of modesty, ye would renounce the titles and the fortunes of your ancestors, with the virtues that attained them. Ye would blush to take place of a beggar that had virtue. Will ye yet pretend to be better men than others, when ye have renounced your humanity, when ye are no longer men, but monsters? It is not expected of you that you should perform acts of heroism and generosity; that you should reward virtue, and support merit in distress. Alas! these expectations are long since vanished, and seem only the boasts of fabulous antiquity. But methinks it might still be expected of you, that you should do common justice; that you should not be worse than the rest of mankind, because yon think yourselves better; at least expect to be called so, and treated as such. Surely it might still be expected of you that you should pay your debts, and keep your promises; and in truth, ye would not be void, either of dignity or dependents, if ye did even this. Mankind are already too much prejudiced in your favour, and would not fail to pay you sufficient regard and reverence, even if you did them no good, provided you did them no mischief. But if ye expect to be esteemed, not only without generosity, but even without justice, ye are indeed unreasonable, and will be sure to be disappointed.

In the next place, Let me apply myself to the wealthy and covetous; these are, of all others, the most inexcusable, in not paying their debts. Men that have made or improved their own fortune by industry are utterly unpardonable in oppressing the industry of others; the least that might be expected from increase of wealth is to do justice with our abundance. This was the express direction of the prophet Elisha, in the 4th chapter of 2 Kings, when he had miraculously increased the widow's oil, he commanded her first to pay her debts out of her abundance: *Go, saith he, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.* And the reason of this is evident, the money we owe is not ours, it is the property of other men, in our keeping, and we have no more right to it than we have to the

in their pockets. And although we should make no return to God for his blessings upon our industry, in alms and acts of goodness, surely the least we can do is to do justice to men. What a dreadful reflection is it to turn the blessings of Providence into a curse to ourselves, and all we have to deal with! Men of this character are in the condition of those malignant insects who fret and make sores wherever they come, and then feed upon them; they thrive upon the miseries of mankind, which is absolutely the most detestable character upon earth! and is, next to that of a fiend, the very worst and vilest that can be imagined. *Woe unto him, saith the prophet Jeremiah, that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong!* (xxii. 13.) *Woe unto them, saith Isaiah (ch. v. ver. 8.), that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!* living in that character of cruelty which is best suited to a beast of prey, that scatters ruin and desolation all around him. One would think the apostle's precepts were reversed to these men; and that they thought themselves bound in conscience to owe every man every thing in the world but love and good-will. And after all, to what purpose is all this oppression, and iniquity of avarice? To heap up ill-got riches for a curse upon themselves and their posterity, and leave a memory and a carcass equally odious and offensive behind them. *They are exalted for a little while, as it is finely expressed in the 24th chapter of Job; They are exalted for a little while, but are gone, and brought low: they are taken out of the way as all other: and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.* They are permitted by the Divine Providence, to fill up at once the measure of their wealth and their iniquity; and, as soon as ever they are ripe for ruin, they are cut off in the fullness of their pride and fortune; and the wealth they have hoarded is like the full ear of corn, which, instead of being gathered into the barn, is trampled under foot, and scattered over the face of the earth; and so becomes a prey to rooks, and swine, and vermin.

In the last place, Let me apply my-

self to traders in themselves, and desire them to reflect how they pay their own debts: I am afraid, some of them very badly. I have heard of a most wicked practice amongst them, of paying their journeymen and underlings in goods: I call this wicked, because, if those goods are rated at the shop-price, the journeyman is plainly defrauded, since he hath no allowance for the time and trouble he must take, and the hazard he must run in vending those goods. And, whereas he had a right to ready money for his labour, his necessities now oblige him to sell those goods at any price he can get, to the discredit of trade in general, and the real injury of that very person who laid him under a necessity of so doing, who must of necessity suffer by having his goods sold at an under-rate: so that this practice is as ill-judged in the shopkeeper, and as weak with regard to his own interest, as it is wicked with regard to his poor underling. And indeed all bad payment to those they have to deal with, especially the poorer sort, is manifestly injurious to men in business; for the clamour of bad pay, and the discredit that necessarily attends it, generally speaking, begins there. And therefore Solomon's precepts (Prov. iii. 27, 28.) ought always to be strictly observed by them, of all mankind: *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.* Although the men you deal with do not know your wants, nor consider your labour and loss of time in seeking your due, and are consequently regardless of you and your necessities, yet you well know the wants of the poor people you deal with, and the injury you do them in making them lose their time in attending upon you; and therefore you are utterly inexcusable in not relieving them from those hardships, when you can do so, barely by doing justice. How can you expect a blessing from God upon your own endeavours, when you are guilty of so much cruelty and injustice to others; when you are guilty of so much injustice to the very men by whose labour ye are supported? *A poor man,*

that oppresseth the poor, (saith Solomon) is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food, (Prov. xxviii. 3.) Nature hath formed us to compassionate the calamities we endure; and therefore a poor man should as naturally expect aid and consolation from his brethren in the same condition, as the parched and impoverished earth expects relief from the showers of heaven; consequently, when, instead of being aided, he is oppressed by his brethren, and the little remains of his substance are torn from him, he is then in the condition of the earth, ravaged and ruined by the very means appointed by Providence to refresh and make it fruitful; and all its seed, all the means and hopes of a future harvest, swept away with its best mould. A poor man, that oppresseth the poor is the cruellest monster in nature; and it is the just judgment of Almighty God, that, with what measure you mete, it should be measured unto you again. He that doth wrong, saith the apostle, (Col. iii. 25.) shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; as he hath done, it shall be done unto him; his reward shall return upon his own head.

And therefore, my brethren, as ye expect mercy, and protection, and blessing, from God; do justice and judgment to all you have to deal with; and be merciful after your power: for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and whatsoever good any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord. So that a man shall say, verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, there is a God that judgeth the earth.

SERMON CXXIV.

BY PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

On the great Importance and Wisdom of early Industry.

PROV. vi. ver. 6, 7, 8.

Ver. 6. Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.—7. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler;—8. Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

It is observable of Solomon, that as he is every where throughout his writings zealous in the praise of industry, so he is no less severe in the reproach of idleness; and yet, at the same time that his indignation is raised against the sluggard, he seems more at a loss how to instruct and reform that unhappy race of mortals than any other whatsoever; men of every other character were capable of improvement from application and industry; but what could be expected from those who were too lazy to put any precepts into practice, however useful and wise? Had he referred them for instruction to the schools of philosophy, many precepts must be learned, and many books turned over; and they must have resolved upon a regular course of study and discipline, before they could attain those habits and that wisdom they wanted; and this he knew would be death to them, even to think of; and therefore the shortest method he could take with them, and indeed the shortest course that could possibly be taken for their amendment, was to remit them for instruction to the ant; where they needed only to look and learn; where, stretched at length by the side of a sunny bank (as proper a situation for sloth as their hearts could wish), they might see all the surprising effects of industry, and learn all the fruits and advantages of it, at their ease, without stirring from the spot, without the expence either of toil or study, and, in short, without any other labour than that of keeping their eyes open.

Here might they behold a little creature labouring under a load of more

than four times its own bulk, and conveying it with incessant industry to the common store; and if he fainted, and grew unequal to the task, he might soon have the pleasure to see a good-natured neighbour hastening to his assistance; the loaded ants going in one way, and the unloaded going out another, that they might not obstruct one another in their passage.

In the course of a few days loitering, he might observe the common stock of provision immensely increased; and, what must be a contemplation of great pleasure to such a genius, he might observe, that the labours of the year ended with the harvest; that, when they had no more to gather, they had no more to do, but to sit down and enjoy what they had got; that they had provided convenient coverings for themselves, and granaries for their food, and were under no necessity of suffering the severities of the winter season, but were warmly lodged in the midst of peace and plenty; and never need put their feet out of doors, unless, perhaps, to sun themselves, or their provisions, after a glut of rain; which were no more than a pleasant recreation after so long confinement. And, lastly, he could not but observe, with conscious shame, that he never met with one idler in the whole community; that every individual contributed something to the public fund, and best consulted his own good, by co-operating for the good of the whole.

When the sluggard had observed all this at his ease, one would think it would not be very hard for him to turn it into an useful lesson of life, and to reason thus shortly and pertinently upon it: I also am a member of society, and should I be utterly insignificant in it? was I made to be less important than an ant? or, am I less bound to contribute to the good of the community? is not my own inseparable from it? and shall I not co-operate for the common good? every society hath a fund of wealth, best acquired by honest arts; from whence also arise the other national funds of power, credit, and esteem; should I be insignificant to all these purposes? and can I be happy, and honourable, if I be?

Let me reflect, if I also can have resolution and industry enough to labour out my season like the ant, I shall not only contribute to the public good, but shall also, probably, be able to get myself a comfortable provision for life.—Life also hath its seasons, like the year; the times of health and strength are its summer and its autumn; if I employ these, as I ought, in some useful and honest pursuit, I shall, in all probability, have acquired wherewithal to support me in the winter of life, when the season of labour is over, and when ease and rest will be very agreeable and desirable to me; how infinitely happy shall I be, if I can live to see the day when I shall have nothing to do but to eat and drink, and take my rest?

And here we see the exceeding wisdom of Solomon's proposing the ant to the imitation of idlers, because it is an example that should excite them to industry, even for the interest of their sloth; forasmuch as it instructs us, that a short course of unwearied industry is the surest means to purchase a long vacation of ease and uninterrupted rest.

It is not barely upon this principle, but upon others of more moment, that I shall endeavour to illustrate the wisdom of early industry (the most important of all social duties) to this audience; and when the wisdom of this virtue hath sufficiently recommended it to you, I hope you will need no other motive to engage you in an earnest pursuit and practice of it.

The importance of this virtue to the public needs no proof; forasmuch as it is self-evident, that no man can be an useful member of society who doth not, some way or other, contribute either to its peace, honour, security, or interest; and how can this be done, without a proper exercise and improvement either of the powers of his body, or mind, or both, in some useful pursuit, is utterly inconceivable. And therefore I shall content myself with shewing the advantage of industry to every man in his private capacity.

And, first, Industry is wise with regard to the interests and concerns of the body: we were made for labour, and a certain portion of exercise is absolutely

necessary to our health and strength; and the body can no more be preserved in vigour without it, than without its natural food. What the condition of our constitution in paradise might be is not easy to say; but it is evident, that from the moment man was driven from that delightful seat, and condemned to support his life by the sweat of his brow, labour is become necessary to our well-being; and though it was pronounced upon Adam as a curse, and in punishment of his transgression, yet, whether it were to manifest the continuance of that curse upon his posterity, or rather, in the usual course of the Divine mercy, to turn curses into blessings to such as patiently submit to his chastenings, and make a right use of them; thus much is certain, that we are doomed to labour from that day to this! God and nature demand it of us; and, if we cannot be happy with it, we must be miserable without it.

As our constitutions are now mortal and corruptible, it is evident, that, in some part or other of them, we die daily; and when those perishing parts become useless to the strength and vigour of the body, they are a load and incumbrance to it; and if not thrown off by exercise, or otherwise, become matter of disease and infirmity to us: and when they grow so numerous as to corrupt the mass of blood, if we have not strength enough to throw them off in the discharges of gout and fevers, we must sink and die under them.

Now the true and natural way of getting rid of these noxious humours, is, by exerting the body in some useful labour, by which its health and strength may be preserved and improved; and, when the body is in vigour, the labours of life will rather be a pleasure than a toil to it; for the body finds as strong and natural a pleasure in employing its powers to their proper ends, as the mind does in the pursuit of truth, or in the employment of any of its faculties to their proper ends. And, on the other hand, a state of idleness and inactivity is as naturally irksome to a man in full health, when the business of life calls for his strength and industry, as it is to a generous steed to be reined in when he is drawn out to the

course. The perfection and happiness of every being, and every thing in this world, consists in the right application and exertion of their powers to the true ends and purposes for which they were ordained; and whenever they are diverted from those ends, or applied to other purposes, they become useless and unhappy. If the body be not employed, it becomes bloated, languid, and enervate: sloth seizes it at first, and all the infirmities of life pursue sloth; and then the languid pleasures of inactivity are followed by the sharp pains of slow and racking distempers: whereas labour, as it is the sure pledge of health, so is it the sure source of all those pleasures that result from it; nay, experience teaches us, that the spirits are raised by exercise into a more constant cheerfulness and vivacity than can be supplied even by the most generous wines: nay, there is a pleasure even in the weariness that succeeds temperate exercise, which far exceeds all the enjoyments of sloth and if the labours and even the languors of industry be agreeable, surely the refreshments of it must be doubly delightful. It was St. Paul's rule, that, *if any would not work, neither should they eat*. And this is not only morally just and righteous, but it is naturally so. The end of food is to supply the wastes of the body from labour; therefore, if men will not labour, neither should they eat; and if they will eat, yet they had better not; for they must do it without appetite, and without pleasure; and, after all, when they have taken in their food, it will turn more into disease than digestion. This is the true state and settled rule of life; but there are exceptions to this rule: there are who live only to eat; whereas labour, as it is entitled to refreshment, so it is entitled to health and happiness from that refreshment. What an exquisite relish does it give to the plainest and coarsest food! and what softness even to a pillow of stone! *The sleep of a labouring man is sweet*, says Solomon; whereas the very rest and ease of the slothful is a burden to him; for it is certain, that as men may eat till the most delicious foods lose all their relish, so they may rest till feathers lose all their softness, till pillows and beds of

down can supply them with no one easy spot whereon to recline their languid head; and, if they chance to dose in that uneasy condition, that sleep, which is a refreshment to a body wearied with labour, can be only an additional grievance to a body that is wearied with rest.

But this is not all; for as industry procures a stock of cheerful health, without which the good things of this life cannot be enjoyed, so is it naturally fitted to procure a fund of good things for the enjoyment of life; for all these are the purchase of industry, as the want of them is the punishment of sloth. *He becometh poor, says the wise man, that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*—And again; *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute.*—*The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*—*The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.* And therefore, whoever desires to lay up a sufficient store of the good things of this life, for the consolation and support of his old age, let him take care to employ his youth in an honest industry; for this is the only sure means of procuring those blessings. And if he fails to do this, let him rest assured, that, in the decline of life, he will be pursued by two of the cruellest evils in life, remorse and poverty, fruitless remorse, and unpitied poverty: whereas the diligent shall not only have wherewithal to supply his own wants, but likewise to relieve the wants of others. *The slothful (as Solomon expresses it) coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous (i. e. he that exerciseth an honest industry) giveth, and spareth not.* The man that hath raised himself by an honest industry, *giveth, and spareth not*; knowing, that, as to the wealth and affluence of this world, *there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life; and that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: this is the gift of God.* And therefore, as far as pleasure is preferable to pain, and health to disease; as far as sprightliness exceeds stu-

pidity, and sound sleep disturbed dreams; as far as freedom is preferable to servitude, and dominion to dependence; as far as plenty, and a power of doing good, surpass pining desire and pinching poverty; so far is industry wiser and better than sloth, even with regard to the concerns of the body.

But, secondly, Industry is wise, with regard to the interest of the soul. Virtue and knowledge are to the soul, what health and strength are to the body; the same industry is equally perfective and useful, and the same indolence equally ruinous and destructive to both: the same sloth that brings diseases upon the body, brings vices and evil affections upon the soul. *I went by the field of the slothful, says Solomon, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof; and the stone wall thereof was broken down.* The field and vineyard of the slothful are exact emblems of his mind: instead of grapes and olives, instead of the noblest fruits of culture and study, it is over-run with thorns and nettles, and evil weeds of every kind; with noxious vices, with perverse appetites, and vexatious humours, that tear, and sting, and are equally vexatious to himself, and all around him, without any more distinction than the briars and nettles of his vineyard make between their owner and any one else that walks through them: nay, not only so, but its *wall is broken down*, its fence of virtue and knowledge is in ruins; nor has it any thing to defend it from the intrusion and devastation of vice: it is now an open prey to every invader.

Plato tells us, that industry is as much preferable to idleness as brightness is to rust; plainly implying, that idleness is to the mind what rust is to metals; and in truth it is so; it does not only tarnish its lustre, and make it unfit for use, but it also eats into it. The mind was formed for exercise, as well as the body; and, if it be unemployed, it will not only grow rusty and dull, but it will also prey upon itself. And though it should not degenerate altogether into the condition of the sluggard's vineyard, though it should not

fall into all the ruin and devastation of vice, yet will it never want thorns and nettles, it will never want sufficient supplies of spleen, and evil appetites, to punish the neglect of honest pursuits and useful attainments. *The desire of the slothful killeth him, saith Solomon; for his hands refuse to labour.* And sure it must be a state of miserable torment, passionately to desire what we see we shall not enjoy, and cannot be at the pains to procure: and it is obvious to observe in the world numbers of men repining to death, every day, at the advancement of others to honour and eminence from the improvement of those abilities which were naturally, perhaps, inferior to their own: and yet all this is but the just and natural reward of honest industry, in proof of that excellent observation of the wise man, (Prov. xxii. 29.) *Seest thou a man diligent in his business: he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*

Again, Industry is yet farther wise with regard to the concerns of the soul, because a proper improvement in knowledge is necessary to all conditions in life. Every man does not need to be a merchant or a mechanic, but every man should be a man of knowledge, and, if possible, a man of learning, at least, in his own profession. For this reason the ancients, though they had but one Ceres, and one Vulcan, one deity that presided over the labours of the hammer and the plough; yet had they nine Muses, because their aid was useful to men of every character and condition in life. Learning is an accession of new light and new knowledge; and new light and new knowledge will always be useful to inform and guide us to more advantage in every pursuit; and there is scarcely any art so mean and mechanic to which learning might not be both ornamental and useful; there is scarcely one profession in the world where a right application of knowledge would not carry us to uncommon degrees of eminence. And if learning be thus honourable in every other profession, surely where it is itself the principal, if not the sole profession, the want of it must be infinitely reproachful; and yet there is no medium; men must

either want it, or take pains to attain it; and hence it is that Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, among the ancients, had the epithet of *Εργαία*, or the worker, given her, to shew that none but the industrious were entitled to her assistance.

Now, as wealth is to be acquired in youth, for the support of age, so knowledge also, with more reason:

1st, Because it is an higher and nobler attainment. And, 2dly, because age, which for the most part adds to our wealth, from the accession of avarice, and the retrenchment of the expensive passions, takes away from our knowledge, by impairing the powers of the mind; and that, when we want it most, both for our own credit, and the instruction of others, therefore we should take care to be plentifully provided. *Wise men,* saith Solomon, *lay up knowledge:*—well knowing it is the noblest and most valuable treasure they can possibly lay up; and it, as the same wise man observes, *the grey head is the beauty of old men,* it is beyond all doubt, that wisdom is the glory of the grey head. *O! how comely a thing is judgment for grey hairs?* (says the wise son of Sirach) *and for ancient men to know counsel? O! how comely is the wisdom of old men, and understanding and counsel to men of honour!* (Ecclus. xxi. 4, 5.) And therefore, as knowledge is better than ignorance, and virtue than vice; as far as culture exceeds wildness and barbarity, and brightness excels rust; as light is more lovely than darkness, and counsel more becoming the grey head than uninformed dotage; so far is diligence wiser, and better, and more valuable, than idleness, with regard even to the temporal interests of the soul.

In the last place: If diligence be wise with regard to the temporal concerns of the soul, it must surely be much more so with regard to its eternal interest. There are many pursuits that are proper and ornamental in life; there are many of high concern, but there is one only of infinite importance; there are many of excellent use; but there is one only of absolute necessity; and happy, beyond all comparison, wise and happy, are they who have early chosen that better part.—*The fear of the Lord,* says Solo-

beginning, is the beginning of wisdom. And it is observable, that the Hebrew word here interpreted the beginning, signifies either the foundation or the top of any thing; and, in the present application of it, it is strictly true in either sense: the fear of the Lord is the foundation and the top of all wisdom. That early and prudent caution, which is the parent and the companion of true wisdom, best enters into the mind, and dwells there, from an awe of religion, from the sense of an infinitely wise and powerful Being always present to every motion in our mind, and every action of our lives; and there is not a thought in our heart that is hid from him; and as this is the best principle of that caution and consideration which should conduct our lives, so is the end it aims at, at once the wisest and the noblest pursuit of reasonable beings; if it be wise to lay up early treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; is it not infinitely more so, to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, where thieves cannot break through and steal? If it be wise to lay up early treasures of knowledge, for the conduct of life, for the improvement of our professions and faculties, and for the honour and ornament of our advanced years, to support us with dignity in the decline of life; is it not infinitely more so, diligently to search after that knowledge that will adorn our Christian profession, and treasure up those precepts that will conduct us to everlasting glory, and give us honour in the sight of angels? Thou sluggard, if it be wise in thee to learn of the ant to make provision for the winter of life, for one short and uncertain season, is it not infinitely more so to lay up for all eternity—for a life of endless duration, and inconceivable happiness?

SERMON CXXV.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The Folly, Iniquity, Absurdity, and Guilt of Duelling.

Exod. xx. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THIS precept being laid down here in general unlimited terms, which, taken in their full extent, equally prohibit taking away the lives of men and of other animals, upon any account whatsoever: the true sense of it must be learnt from comparing this with other parts of the scriptures.

That it was not intended to preclude men from the right of taking away the lives of others, in any circumstance whatsoever, is evident from the 2d verse of the 22d chapter of this book of Exodus; where the thief found breaking up in the night, that is, breaking into your house, or making use of any force to rob you, is permitted to be slain. And from many other parts of the scriptures it appears, that persons guilty of certain crimes are expressly commanded to be put to death; such as the witch, the blasphemer, the murderer, the disobedient son, &c.

That the command was not intended as an absolute prohibition to take away the lives of the inferior creatures, is evident from the grant given to Noah, and, in him, to all his posterity, in the 9th chapter of Genesis; where creatures are given for food in as ample a manner as the herbs of the field were given before; only with this restraint, that the blood was not to be eaten with the flesh.

Forasmuch then as neither criminals nor inferior creatures are prohibited to be slain by this precept, it follows, that nothing is prohibited by it, but murder; that is, the taking away the life of any man unjustly. In this case, and in this only, we are to understand that denunciation of Divine justice to be due. *And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man: at the hand of every man's brother will I*

require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.

When God gave man a right to the creatures for food, prohibiting them to eat the blood with the flesh, in that prohibition he virtually commands them to shed the blood of those creatures, before they made the flesh their food; and as he knew this power and practise of shedding of blood would by degrees harden the mind, and be an inlet to cruelty, even to their own species; he guards in the most effectual manner imaginable against that evil, by a dreadful denunciation of vengeance against all those that should dare to shed the blood of man. *And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of men, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.* The meaning of all which is, (and so the best interpreters understand it,) that God will arm every living creature, both brute and human, to the destruction of the murderer; as I believe there is scarcely a creature so contemptible, either in earth or air, whom he hath not at one time or other made the instrument of his vengeance on that crying guilt. And, as if all this security were insufficient, he fences in this lord of the nether world, yet farther, with the veneration of his Maker's image stamped upon him. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.*

How nobly is this declaration fitted to convey this great document, and impress it deep on the whole race of Adam! that God, the great guardian and governor of the world, watched over the lives of men with so peculiar a providence, that if any man should dare to shed the human blood, sure vengeance should pursue him: that the Divine justice would arm the powers of every living creature to his destruction; nay, would arm his own brother's right hand to his ruin.

And how nobly is the justice and the solemnity of this declaration asserted in

the reason annexed: *For in the image of God made he man.* What less extended vengeance was due to that devoted miscreant, to that sacrilegious arm, that should violate the majesty of the Creator's image, where his goodness, his wisdom, and his power had impressed it: than to have the whole creation in array against him?

Murder is in itself a crime so destructive to society, and so dreadful to nature, that nothing need to be said to aggravate the horror of it to the human mind. But forasmuch as the corruptions of mankind have at length found out a way of perpetrating this crying guilt, in this part of the world, not only always with impunity, but often with applause, have even made it honourable under the fashionable appellation of duelling. My business at present shall be to examine it in this view; and to shew you by God's assistance, that no disguise of name, or power of custom, can make this practice less detestable in the eye of reason, or less criminal in the eye of God.

And in order to do this, I shall inquire, first into the origin of this practice of duelling.

And secondly, into the causes and occasions of it. And, under this head, shall endeavour to shew you, how wicked, how absurd, how pernicious it is, in all its pretences; and how dreadful in its final issue.

And first as to its original, it is agreed by the best writers on this subject, that the practice was in the beginning undoubtedly derived from a principle of humanity; and a tenderness for the lives of mankind. And the best accounts I have been able to collect concerning it are as follow.

When nations happened to fall into contentions, which could not be accommodated by treaty, nor determined by hostility, without infinite slaughter and devastation; to spare the effusion of so much blood, it was sometimes agreed amongst them, to leave the decision of the controversy to the hazard of a few lives. And to agree, that the consequence of such a conquest should be the same as if those nations had contended with all their numbers. Such was that of Paris and Menelaus, in Homer; and

Thucydides and Melanthius, kings of Athens and Lacedæmonia. Such also was that of the Horatii and Curiatii in the Roman history, and of Edmund Ironside and Canute the Dane, in the history of England. Nor is this practice wholly out of use in the heathen world, at this day. Such was that between the king of Pegu, and his uncle, about the kingdom of Ava; mentioned by Mandelso in his travels (p. 96.)

And this kind of duelling was, without question, humane and just; forasmuch as it violated no law of God or man; and was in prevention of much greater evil.

The next kind of duelling that we meet with in history was, when two hostile armies being contiguous to one another, either avowedly or tacitly agreed, that a chosen champion of either side should combat for the honour of his country. Such was the duel of David and Goliath, (1st book of Samuel.) Such also was that of Manlius Torquatus, and, after that, of Valerius Corvinus, with two Gauls, who challenged the valiantest of the Romans to single combat. And many later instances of the same kind: and these without question were lawful; because permitted by their commanders, and performed, for the most part, by persons whose lives were devoted to the service of the public, in arms. So that whether they fell in single combat, or in a more general engagement, their lives were equally expended in the service of their country.

Another kind of duelling, formerly practised in the western part of the world, was either upon accusation of life, or trial of right; and the occasions of them were as follow:

When any person accused another of treason, or any other capital crime, the person accused, if he insisted upon his innocence, had a right to retort the lie upon his accuser, and challenge him to make good his charge by combat. Now this practice, although perhaps not strictly justifiable, yet, however, much may be said in defence of it: because it was a terror to false and malicious accusations; and was, in the person accused, an appeal to Almighty God, for the innocence of his heart. Besides, that public justice

seems to be concerned, is not easily admitting that a good subject's life should be taken away, upon a single testimony; which might be grounded either upon mistake, or malice, or corruption. And, on the other hand, as single testimonies should not easily be slighted, those certainly must have most weight which the authors were ready to vouch, at the hazard of their lives. And therefore it is not much to be wondered at, if in ages more martial and less refined, in the reasons and rules of justice, combats of this kind were allowed of by public authority. And of these many instances are to be met with in the histories of France and England.

As to the other points; viz. duels upon trial of right or inheritance, these also were very antient. Such was the duel of Corbis and Orsua, two Spanish noblemen, about the principality of the city Ibes, mentioned by Livy, in the twenty-eighth book of his history. And instances of the same kind are to be met with in our own histories.

Now these were occasioned by such disputes about rights, as were not easily decided by law; and therefore the parties chose to bring the controversy to a shorter issue, by combat: and the law allowed them to do so. And these duels proceeded upon the same principles with those upon accusation of life last-mentioned; and from a persuasion, that God would determine the issue of the combat, according to the rights of the cause.

It was for these reasons, and upon these principles, that duelling obtained and was allowed in the world, from the earliest ages, until the time of the emperor Charles the Vth; who having charged Francis the French king with breach of faith, Francis retorted the lie upon him, and provoked him to single combat; which, however, that wise and valiant emperor thought fit to decline.

From this accident, the high spirit of the Gallic nation (who are not justly chargeable with want of sufficient bravery), in compliment to their prince, and the better to demonstrate that injurious and high provocation he had given the emperor, established the giving of the lie as the highest indignity that could be offered to human nature; and such as

every man of honour ought to resent to death; imagining, it would reflect no small glory upon their nation, that the meanest gentleman in France would not put up with an indignity, which the great Charles the Vth endured with patience.

And as that nation have been sufficiently successful in giving rise to many other fashions of less consequence, so likewise hath their example derived this wicked and pernicious practice all over Europe: and, in so doing, been the occasion of more bloodshed in the compass of a few years, than all the duels known in the world from the foundation of it, till that time. Except perhaps such duels as were more antiently authorized in their own country, upon trials of right; till those practices were restrained by St. Lewis and St. Philip the fair. And it is a justice due to the memory of their last great monarch, Lewis the XIVth, to own, that he did, with great wisdom, and a most religious fortitude, repress this practice throughout his own dominions: and, if other princes have not followed his example, it must however be owned that it was not his fault, if this evil hath not found an effectual remedy where it had its rise.

As to the duels antiently in use, they were, as I before observed, founded, for the most part, upon humanity and justice; upon the honour of nations; and upon trials of right, and vindication of innocence; and that too by public authority. And were, in some sort, appeals to Almighty God. Whereas those of the last and the present age, if not in direct opposition to all these great ends, are at least utterly destitute of every one of them, founded upon fantastic and absurd points of honour! points of honour as they are called; but, in truth, points of infamy! nor is it possible it should be otherwise, when they are acted in direct contradiction to the public good, to public authority, to religion, and virtue of every kind; as will appear by examining this matter a little more exactly.

And, in order to do this, give me leave to lay down the following positions, as undoubted truths:

First, That honour, with regard to others, is nothing but the fame of virtue; that is, it is that reputation which arises

from the opinion which mankind conceive of our virtue, attended with esteem and regard; the natural consequence, and in some sort, the natural reward of virtue and worth of every kind. Firstly, I say, true honour, with regard to others, is fame arising from the reputation of virtue; and secondly, with regard to ourselves, true honour is the utmost refinement and perfection of virtue, in the discharge of every duty in life. And this will appear evidently from asking ourselves these two plain questions: First, Why we honour any man? and secondly, Who they are whom we honour? Do we honour any man for cowardice, or theft, or villainy of any kind? no; we honour men for courage, for honesty, for integrity. We honour nothing but virtue and worth: we can honour nothing else: and what is strictly and properly called true honour, in any man, is nothing but refinement in virtue.

For example; a man of honour will not fail to pay a just debt, although the law could not oblige him to it. A man of honour will keep his word, although no man alive could prove the violation of it upon him; nor exact the performance of it. A man of honour will return the pledge committed to his trust, although the owner were dead, and no mortal conscious to it.

And the reason is obvious; a man of honour hath more regard to truth and justice, than he hath either to self-interest or the terrors of the law; truth and justice are the rules and measures of his conduct; and therefore a man of honour will tell the truth, although he be sure to suffer by it; and although he might disguise it without any possible damage or reproach, other than from his own conscience.

Such is a man of honour in his private capacity.

In a public character, a man of honour will pique himself upon discharge of duty to the public, on every just occasion, what danger or distress soever attend that discharge; and although neither danger nor infamy attended the neglect of it. For instance, in the army, a man of honour will not fail to discharge every part of duty incumbent upon him: neither will he let the meanest soldier ex-

ceed him in the lowest point of discipline, although possibly he might do so without infamy or punishment.

A man of honour will maintain the post assigned him, although ten thousand dangers and difficulties attended it. Neither will he hesitate to go upon the most difficult attempt, which his duty points out to him, although infinite hazard await it. And so in every other instance. The man of honour is studious to discharge his duty to the public above every consideration, either of danger or advantage, or of whatever consequence to himself; and so in every other condition of life. A man of honour will discharge every virtue proper to that condition, with the utmost exactness, and in the highest refinement: for honour, as I before observed to you, is nothing but the reputation arising from the practice of virtue with regard to others; and, with regard to ourselves, the steady practice of it, in all the refinement it is capable of; especially such virtues as are proper to that peculiar character.

To illustrate this yet farther, in other instances. Honour in a judge is more peculiarly and emphatically a conscientious dispensation of justice, free from all partiality and corruption. In a woman, it is a nice regard to chastity, and the fame of it. In a soldier, fortitude; in a prince, the preservation of his faith, his dominions, and the good of his people. Honour in private life is strict justice, and inviolable regard to promises and engagements of every kind: this is the true notion of honour. Virtue is the standard by which it must be eternally judged; and whoever goes about to separate it from virtue, in any character, or condition, or circumstance of life, doth at the same instant destroy it, and turn it into infamy; for infamy is nothing but the fame of vice; that is, that scandal and evil report which necessarily attend vice and villainy of every kind, in the opinion of all wise and good men.

Let duelling then be examined by this test, whether it be honourable or infamous.

And first, the great occasion of duelling is giving the lie? and a lie is infamous, because it is an imputation upon our virtue of veracity.

Now this imputation is either just or unjust. If the imputation be just, certainly there can be no injury in affixing it. And, as to the indignity that may accrue from such an imputation, the criminal is himself the author of that. You did the injury, and fixed the indignity, when you were guilty of the evil that deserved it. And he that imputeth that guilt to you, doth you no more injury than he that should tell you, you were handsome or valiant, when you were so. And the way to wipe off this imputation, is, to repent, and offend against truth no more.

Well! but your honour is injured, and you must repair it by fortitude. How? injure an honour which hath no existence! what an abuse of words is this? you forfeited your honour the moment you told the lie. And now you would repair that crime, by committing a greater. You would repair falsehood, by murder. But say the imputation is unjust: one would think the natural way of taking off this imputation should be, by manifesting the truth, and letting the whole world see the falsehood of the charge laid against you. And, if this be done, then certainly no infamy rests upon you; but returns that instant upon the author. For then, the lie is, of necessity, and from the nature of the thing, retorted upon him.

But still he hath endeavoured to do you an injury; and perhaps this imputation, although now cleared, hath been of real ill consequence to you: I answer, as to his endeavour of injuring you, he hath infamy for his pains. And if he hath any remains either of equity, or modesty, or good manners, he will take shame to himself for so doing, by a proper submission: if he hath not, he is no otherwise to be accounted of than a bear and a brute! but, however, all brutality is not to be chastised by death. It is sufficiently punished by the natural infamy and contempt that await it. And to them you may refer it. And for this you have an example of sufficient weight in the conduct of Socrates (a man of eminent fortitude) on a like occasion, who being rudely treated by a worthless fellow, as he passed in the public street, took no notice of it: and being asked by

one of his companions how he could bear such an indignity from such a miscreant? calmly answered, If an ass should kick at me, would you have me kick again? We have also a like instance in the elder Cato, who, when a beastly fellow spit in his face, only answered, If any one should ask me hereafter whether you have any mouth, I know what to tell him. Thus are trifling indignities to be treated; but if any person hath done you a real injury, the courts of justice are open: and the officers of justice who preside in them are at least as skilful, and as equitable judges of the nature of the injury, and the reparation due to it, as you can be.

Well, but a man of honour scorns to go to law for an abuse, whilst he wears a sword to right himself! what strange language, and how senseless a rodomontade is this! a man of honour scorn the rules of justice! Is then contempt of public justice the effect of honour? or rather is it consistent with any degree of it? Honour is the refinement of virtue! is it virtue to despise the public order and peace of society? nay, more, to insult it? honour is the exact discharge of every duty proper to our station. Is not submission to public authority the first duty of every man, of every station in society? and is honour a principle contradistinct to virtue and duty of every kind? if it be, away with it from all civil and religious communities. The king upon the throne is bound by the laws of his country; and is a man of honour exempt from them? is he greater than his prince? this pretence then is stupid, and senseless to the last degree. And therefore there is reason to believe, that generally speaking it is but a pretence: and that the real truth is, that most quarrels of this kind are in themselves so very trifling or scandalous, that the authors are ashamed to let them appear in the courts of justice. And, it so, what folly and madness is it to risk your own life and your neighbour's, upon a point of so trivial or shameful a nature, that it will not bear to be seriously examined by the rules of reason and justice.

But still it may be urged, that honour is (with regard to others) the reputation

arising from the fame of virtue; and vindicating an injury done to us is an indication of courage; and consequently is attended with a fame of virtue. I answer, that when courage is a virtue, it is always employed in the discharge of some duty, the neglect of which would be a vice. For courage is not in itself a virtue; it is so only when it is employed in a good cause; otherwise it is heat and rashness. For as it is not the punishment that makes the martyr, so it is not fighting that makes the hero: it is the cause that constitutes both. Nay, even fighting in a good cause is not virtue, unless it be also in discharge of duty. And therefore it was that Manlius the Roman consul executed his own son for fighting with Geminus, the general of the Latins, contrary to his orders; although he came off with conquest: as you may read in the 8th book of Livy. Here the cause was good. He fought with the enemy of his country. The event also was glorious. He slew and spoiled the hostile general, which was the height of all glory in arms. But yet, all this being against duty, instead of being honourable, became infamous; and he died, like the meanest slave, by the hands of the common executioner.

And thus, having shewn you the origin of duelling, the present degeneracy of that practice, and the false pretences of honour upon which it is built, I should now proceed to inquire into the true causes of that fashionable infamy. But this (the time not now permitting) must be deferred to another occasion.

SERMON CXXVII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The same Subject continued.

Exod. xx. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

IN a former discourse on these words, I entered into a dissertation upon the rise and cause of duelling in the world; in which I shewed you, that it had its original from humanity and mercy. When

hostile armies, to spare the effusion of human blood, agreed to leave the decision of their disputes to the combat of one or more chosen champions, on either side; and that it was afterwards allowed in Christian countries, on trials of right and innocence, which could not otherwise be so easily decided.

I likewise shewed you the original of that kind of duelling now in fashion amongst us. That it had its beginning from the lie given by Francis the First of France to the emperor Charles the Vth; from whence, giving the lie became the mortal offence among those who have the assurance to call themselves men of honour. On this occasion, I inquired into the true nature of honour, and shewed you that it was nothing with regard to the world, but the fame of virtue; and with regard to ourselves, a refined sense of virtue, and a strictness in the practice of it, even where no law could punish the violation of it, or witness reproach it. I then proceeded to examine the present practice of duelling by this test. And shall now proceed to examine it further upon the same principle.

I observed to you, in the foregoing discourse, that the mortal offence among duellists was giving the lie. Now it is worth while to inquire, whether their resentment of this offence be owing to a right sense of honour; that is, a high regard to the virtue of veracity, and a just indignation for being thought destitute of it; or whether it be only a resentment of custom and conceit, without any regard to virtue.

For if they act in this case from a principle of honour, that is, from a regard to the virtue of veracity, it is plain they will have the same regard to it, in every other circumstance of life. Whereas the very contrary to all this is remarkable in many of them. And nothing is more notorious in their practice than customary lying and swearing, and breach of promises and engagements of every kind. And surely, he that promiseth to pay a just debt on a certain day, and faileth to do so, otherwise than through unavoidable necessity, both lieth, and is unjust at the same time. And in this sense, how many of these ho-

roes are liars up 1 record, for breach of word and bond; and yet I do not find it customary with them, to challenge the agent who manageth the prosecution, nor the judge who determineth the cause against them, for wounding their honour.

This then is the case: simple lying, is, in the opinion of these brave spirits, a mortal offence; but when perjury or injustice is added to it, then it becomes innocent, and leaves no blemish or stain upon their honour.

From hence it appeareth, that pride is the fountain of this vice. These duellists, not having virtue enough to be ashamed of doing evil, have yet vanity enough not to bear its being imputed to them. And therefore they would reconcile contradictions. They would be honourable in their fame, although they are infamous in their practice. And the way to be so is, to present death upon the point of their sword to any one that shall dare to taint their honour; that honour, which they have long since forfeited, and have now no more title to than to the money or the estates they have spent. Besides, what but intolerable vanity and impudence can set men so far above all laws, above all government and jurisdiction, as to assume to themselves a right both of judging and executing in their own cause, in direct contempt of all authority, both of God and man? And is the wretch that dare do this a fit member of civil or religious society? or rather should he not be regarded as a monster and outcast of the earth, and banished the society of every thing but chains and dungeons, and the lashes of his own conscience? And therefore if religion and government were no way concerned in this practice, and the influence of it reached no farther than those infamous wretches who are the common authors of it, nothing were more desirable in society than that this profligate race should go on, like the Cadmean brethren, to butcher one another with all convenient dispatch, and rid mankind of such a pest without the trouble or expence of public executions. But till that be done let them be abandoned like lepers, and let no man that would be clear either in his reputation or in his conscience converse with them,

upon pain of infamy. And surely Solomon rightly adviseth, to drive such a one from our conversation. *Cast out the scorner* (saith he), *and contention shall go out; yea strife and reproach shall cease.*

Another parent of this practice is cowardice. And however strange this may appear at first sight, a little reasoning will clearly evince it to be so. For first, most men, although they have not courage yet greatly affect a reputation of it; that is, such a reputation as may secure them from insults another time. And the way to do this is to seem hot and fiery, and challenge some person of note for the sword; in hopes, that some lucky accident, or the interposition of friends, (which it is in every man's power to procure,) may prevent the ill consequences of the quarrel. And so, they may at once establish their reputation of courage and secure their persons. And all this is plainly the effect of cowardice. And it hath been justly observed by men of experience in transactions of this kind, that outward blusterings are very often only a mask to conceal inward tremblings, and that perhaps on both sides; insomuch, that the words of St. Paul, used upon another occasion, are yet strictly applicable upon this. (2 Cor. vii. 5.) *Without were fightings, within were fears.*

But duelling is yet more so, considered in another light. For cowardice is nothing but fearing against reason. Whereas a rational fear is no more cowardice than a rational hope is presumption and impudence. Now it is agreed among mankind, that of all the duels that have been fought in the world, much the greater number had been declined, did the persons concerned think they could fairly save their honour in doing so. And this, men of known and approved courage are often heard to declare from their own knowledge, and even in their own case. Now if this be an irrational and unjust fear, then whatever is acted upon this principle is the effect of cowardice. And that it is altogether irrational is evident. For what can be more foolish than to fear infamy from discharge of duty, from obedience to the divine authority, and the laws of the land? for this would be

to reverse all the principles and foundations of honour and infamy; to call virtue vice, and vice virtue; and is, literally, to execute that woe upon ourselves which God Almighty hath denounced against all those *that call evil good, and good evil.* And I appeal to every man of common sense, whether any person that had courage enough to act upon these principles, and to declare to the whole world that he did so, could possibly suffer in his reputation of virtue, that is, in his honour, by so doing? or rather would not rise in both, in the esteem of all wise and good men: nay, whether those very braves who extorted this declaration from him, would not, if they had any remains either of virtue or of common sense, reverence him for it in their hearts.

And, God be praised, there is yet so much virtuous courage in the world, that several men of known and approved valour have openly declared against duels; and have refused challenges sent them, in avowance of duty.

And therefore the real truth is, that all those who allow themselves in this practice of duelling, do unknowingly conclude themselves under the basest and most scandalous character in life; cowards to men, and braves to God! *cowards to the opinion of the idlest, the weakest and the most worthless part of mankind! and braves to the great governor of the universe; to the wisest, the mightiest, and the best of beings!* They fear what a wise man should scorn above all things, the opinion of the thoughtless, the ignorant, and the insignificant. And they scorn what a wise man should fear and reverence above every thing else in the world, the violation of duty, and the wrath of God: so that this practice is plainly an absurd composition of pride, and folly, and cowardice, and hardened impiety.

But here it may be objected, how it is possible for a man to risk his life out of fear! to this I answer, that nothing is more common in the world to this day, nor more obvious in the history of it throughout all ages; for (as my lord Bacon rightly observeth) there is no passion in the mind so weak but that it mastereth the fear of death; revenge triumph-

eth over it, love slighteth it, honour aspireth to it, grief flieth to it, and fear preventeth it. Nay pity hath sometimes provoked death; as we find that when Otho slew himself, many others followed out of mere compassion and tenderness to their sovereign. And Otho himself is commonly instanced in the number of those that have died through cowardice. That is, either through fear of death, or infamy and reproach.

Petronius Arbitrator, master of Nero's pleasures, cut his veins because his master frowned upon him. Hannibal, for fear of being given up to the Romans, poisoned himself, as did Demosthenes for fear of being given up to Antipater. And Labienus, the historian, mentioned by Seneca, because he would not outlive the infamy of having his books burnt by public edict, burnt himself. Nay the great Cato plainly executed himself through fear of Cæsar's mercy. At least it is certain, that he and all the rest died through cowardice, even upon the principles of heathenism: for all the wiser antients were agreed, that man had no dominion over his own life, but was placed in the world like a centinel upon his post. And what more scandalous cowardice than to desert the station appointed to us, because of some unforeseen difficulties that attend the maintaining it.

And of all fears the mind can be possessed with, fear of the opinion of fools is, beyond all question, the most scandalous; and, therefore, such as risk their lives upon that principle, are the basest of all cowards both to reason and virtue.

But still custom and the practice of the world is against you. Why, and for that very reason St. Paul adviseth you against it. *Be not conformed to this world, nor to any wicked custom howsoever prevalent in it.* Custom, although founded upon reason and convenience, is at best no rule of action or life. But if it be in opposition to both, it is surely a wretched plea for irrational actions, and is only the last and most senseless refuge of affectation and stupidity. Now duelling is manifestly absurd to the last degree, although it were not impious. For supposing I am injured, and that I had a right to vindicate myself with my own

arm; can any thing be more ridiculous than to put myself upon an equal hazard with him that injured me in that vindication? nay, perhaps upon a much greater. Whereas in reason, I ought to punish his offence, with hazard to him alone that committed it. Else, I only add an injury of my own to one that he hath already done me, or give him a fair chance of doing me a greater, than which nothing can be more absurd. And besides the stupidity of it in this respect, it is absurd also in every other. Forasmuch as it is neither a proper test of the courage of the combatants, nor the justice of their cause. Not of the first, for how can that be a proper arbitration of courage where a coward that is perfect in his sword shall kill the bravest man alive? neither can that be an arbitration of the justice of a cause, where the decision dependeth upon the skill of the parties; and where the injured may fall and the injurer triumph in a second offence, and of a far higher nature than the first.

But besides the folly and stupidity of this practice, I beseech you to consider the iniquity of it. What right have you over that life which you risk, or over that which you invade? Should you attempt upon your neighbour's property by force you would doubtless be deemed a robber and a ruffian. And are you not worse, both in the eye of reason, and the judgment of the law, when you attempt upon his life? for there you add robbery to murder: nay robbery in a variety of relations. The government is robbed of a subject; the society of a member; the widow of a kind and careful husband; and the orphan of a tender parent. And yet he that perpetrates this complicated villainy, either out of pique, or pride, or malice, or perhaps out of gaiety of heart, (as the French call it,) would be deemed a man of honour! than which there cannot be a more monstrous abuse of words, or a greater insult upon the common sense of mankind.

It is upon these principles that the Turks suffer no such thing as duels in their dominions. And that reproof, which Buebequius tells us, a Bashaw at Constantinople gave a valiant man, for boasting that he had challenged his enemy, is very

well worth our notice : “ How durst thou “ (said he) challenge thy fellow-soldier to “ a duel ? what, was there never a Christian to fight with ? do both of you “ eat the emperor’s bread ? yet forsooth “ you must go about to take one another’s lives ; what precedent had you “ for this ? don’t you know that whoever “ of the twain had died, the emperor “ had lost a subject ? ” Whereupon he was immediately hauled to prison, where he lay pining many months, and was at last with difficulty released ; yet with the loss of his reputation.

And thus I have examined into the nature of this detestable practice of duelling, and shewn you how destructive it is of all those ends, for which that practice was first introduced and allowed in the world. I have shewn you that in its present degeneracy it is base and infamous. It is infamous in its origin, (the child of vice and ignorance, begotten by pride and folly,) nor is it less infamous in its practice, if acting in direct contradiction to all the principles of honour and virtue, and duty of every kind, can give a just title to infamy. In a word, I have shewn you how stupid, how impious, how abominable it is in all its circumstances and pretences ; the vaunt indeed of valour, but for the most part the real effect of cowardice, and that too the most shameful cowardice imaginable ; the fear of the opinion of fools ; a pretence of heroism, unknown to the great heroes of antiquity, to the Grecians and to the Romans, the greatest examples of mortal prowess : and at the same time greatly degenerating both from the honour and the piety of that practice in our own ancestors.

And now, my brethren, what is the issue of all this extravagance ? dreadful either way. If the man hath slain his antagonist, he hath perhaps in his person slain his best friend. At least he ceaseth to be his enemy that instant ; and the sword hath no sooner pierced his breast, but horror and remorse have pierced his murderer, have stabbed him to the soul ! his vanity sinks into dejection, and his anger into anguish, and all his excess of wrath and revenge rush into yet greater excesses of sorrow, and self-detestation, and all the distractions of distress. The

dreadful deed is no sooner done, but he would give the whole world, nay he would almost die to undo it ; and doubtless the exchange were in many cases wise, were it possible to be effected. If this murderer’s death could buy off all the horrors of his conscience, and anguish of his remaining life, given up to remorse and misery ; since the same hand that fixed a dagger into his brother’s breast, did, in that very act, fix a fury in his own, to sting his conscience, and to poison his quiet to the last moment of his life.

But, my brethren, the greatest terror is yet behind. If this detestable practice ended only in folly, and pride, and tumult, nay if it terminated only in murder and remorse ; if blood could expiate the guilt, or the grave hide it, or misery and distraction atone for it, possibly something might be said to palliate the horror of it ; but when, in all appearance, the issue is yet more dreadful ; when the poor wretch is sent down quick to perdition with all his offences upon his head, and in the very act, perhaps, of the greatest guilt he is capable of committing. God ! God ! who can bear the horror ? *for this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black* (saith the prophet Jeremiah iv. 28.) ; *for this land shall be visited ; for as a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness ; violence and spoil is heard in her ; before me continually is grief and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, saith the Lord ; lest I make thee desolate ; a land not inhabited.* (iv. 7, 8.) *For this gird you with sack-cloth, lament and howl, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned back from you* (iv. 8.)

Let me conclude with that pathetic exhortation of Isaiah to the Jews in the first chapter of his prophesy, (15, 16.) *wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, saith the Lord, lest when you spread forth your hands I hide mine eyes from you, yea when you make many prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood.* From this guilt, and from the vengeance due to it, God of his infinite mercy deliver this city, and this nation ; through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

How criminal and utterly inconsistent with duty the practice of duelling is in the gentlemen of the army, may be seen by the following extract from the articles of war:

"No officer or soldier shall presume to send a challenge to any other officer or soldier, to fight a duel, upon pain, if a commissioned officer, of being cashiered; if a non-commissioned officer, or soldier, of suffering corporal punishment at the discretion of a court-martial."

"Whatsoever officer or soldier shall upbraid another of refusing a challenge, shall himself be punished as a challenger; and we hereby acquit and discharge all officers and soldiers of any disgrace or opinion of disadvantage, which might arise from their having refused to accept of challenges, as they will have only acted in obedience to our orders, and done their duty as good soldiers, who subject themselves to discipline." Articles of War, sect. vii. art. 2, 5.

Clauses in the 19th article of war from the *Adventurer*, No. 70.

"Nor shall any officer or soldier upbraid another for refusing a challenge; since, according to these our orders, they do but the duty of soldiers, who ought to subject themselves to discipline; and we do acquit and discharge all men who have quarrels offered, or challenges sent to them, of all disgrace or opinion of disadvantage in their obedience hereunto: and whosoever shall upbraid them, or offend in this case, shall be punished as a challenger."

There is another article or clause of an article upon which a commander will always break an officer that refuses a challenge, notwithstanding the above clause, and the two articles in Delany's sermons against duels, &c.

"That if any officer does not behave himself like a gentleman, he shall be broke."

SERMON CXXVII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D. D.

The great Evil, and Folly, and Guilt, of Gaming.

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

THE fundamental and essential distinction between the heathen and Christian religion is no-where so clearly alluded to, and in effect summed up, as in the words now recited. *Be not conformed to this world, &c.*

The corruptions of the heathen world depressed their gods into the lowest degree of brutality, transformed them from

the character of divine beings into the conditions and qualities of beasts of all kinds; and of consequence debased their adorers in the same proportion. The purpose of the Christian religion is the direct contrary; to raise and to refine. To raise mortals into the noblest characters and conditions of immortal beings, to raise them into the resemblance of the God of heaven.

This is the plain purpose of that noble exhortation in my text, *be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.* The true way of proving what that will of God is, after we have studied it, is to be conformed to it; and consequently, to be as far removed from the condition and character of this world as from darkness to light, and brutal corruption to divine purity. And therefore to exhort, and, as far as in them lieth, to raise men from the grovelling pursuits and purposes of this low earth, to the noblest, the most exalted aims and ends of heavenly piety and purity, is the great business of the ministers of the Gospel. And as the first step to purity is to quit pollution, the business of this, and some following discourses, shall be to warn you of the evil of many practices too prevalent in the world; which have not only lost all their deformity in the higher and more fashionable part of it, but have also gained not only much countenance, but even some degree of credit and applause from them, and therefore, call aloud for rebuke and chastisement. I shall at present mention but these three; duelling, gaming, and luxury.

The first of these I have already treated of in the two preceding discourses. I come now to consider the second, namely, gaming, and to urge the best reasons I can against this wicked and pernicious practice; and, to shew you that it is of the last consequence to you to fly it with the utmost caution.

For, first, all gaming, for any thing considerable is founded upon avarice, and is, if not a direct, yet (what is much worse) a deliberate violation of the tenth commandment; and therefore, in this respect, it is perhaps the vice of all others

most inexcusable; in crimes of other kinds, surprise, inattention, and violence of passion, although they cannot wholly excuse the committal, yet doubtless they alleviate much of the guilt, but here all these pretences are taken away, and men are so far from being under the influence of any of these alleviating circumstances, that nothing is more notorious than their proceeding to the practice of this vice with the utmost caution and coolness of judgment. And we are told, that it is in contests of this kind as in war; he that hath most presence of mind, and is least embarrassed, is generally most successful.

Besides the deliberate impiety of this vice, it were worth while to consider also the folly of it. For what can be more absurd than for any man in his senses, without any necessity, to put it to the chance of a die whether his house, his money, or his estate, shall be his own, or another man's? So that nothing but a desperate state of affairs can ground the least appearance of a reasonable plea for such a practice. And even in that case, if the property of a third person can any way be hazarded by the risk we run, then is great dishonesty added to great imprudence; and therefore suppose there were no impiety in this practice, yet such is the folly and danger of it, that you can scarce invent a case where it would be pardonable, even upon the score of stupidity, unless you could suppose a fool of wealth so immensely rich that losses of that kind could not affect the main of his fortune; but that supposition is impossible. Since it is evident, that no fortune can be so large and inexhaustible as to be able to supply an extravagance of this kind. There is no fund adequate to gaming, nor can you imagine any condition of life so immensely affluent as may not be exhausted by an extravagance of this kind in one hour.

Well, but men may limit themselves in this extravagance, and resolve never to exceed a certain sum; true, men may easily make such resolutions; but the difficulty is, how to keep them, when losses and ill luck have fretted their spirits, and inflamed their blood to such a degree that they have lost the thoughts of

every thing but recovery and revenge; and I dare say, if it were possible to make an estimate of such resolutions, not one in ten thousand of them hath ever been kept. Nay, is it not madness to expect that men in so raving and distracted a condition, as losing gamblers are often observed to be; that will not stick to abuse their best friends; will swear a thousand vain oaths in a breath: profane, nay blaspheme the sacred name of God, without regret; to expect that creatures in that condition should regard resolutions of caution and prudence is an extravagance of folly almost equal to theirs. And, indeed, such is the distraction and extravagance of men in that condition, that I know nothing more likely to deter any man of reflection either from entering into such a course of life, or continuing in it, than a calm observation of that series of distractions, which, if I am well informed, (for I thank God I speak not by experience,) tear the breast of a losing gambler in the course of a few hours. The ravings of a fever, and the pangs of a convulsion, are nothing to them: nay, in all appearance, they are the liveliest emblems of the torments of hell; made up of a wild mixture of fury and anguish, regret and despair: so that if nothing but the philosophy of life were concerned in this practice, a man of common prudence would avoid it as a pestilence, as the greatest bane to the peace and tranquillity of life.

But it may be urged, that there are men of such cool and calm tempers as never to be ruffled or heated, either into any discomposure of their temper or disturbance of their understanding on such occasions. And therefore, these men seem to be an exception to all the prohibitions of prudence that lie against gaming. In answer to this, it cannot, I believe, be denied, that there are such men in the world; but then I believe it can not well be denied that they are men of the worst characters in it; they are men who have studied all the arts of fraud and villainy of every kind to perfection; black, saturnine, deliberate villains, who lay themselves out by all the wiles of flattery, wine, seduction, and deceit, to draw the unwary into their snares; and when they once get them there, destroy

them without remorse. They are to the light unthinking part of the world, what the spider is to the fly: they wait with cool, deliberate, unwearied patience, till they get their prey within their nets, and then drain out their vitals without remorse; or to speak more properly, enjoy their dying complaints. One would imagine the psalmist had this scene in view in his description of those hardened miscreants, whose snares and nets are spread for the innocent. *He lieth in wait to catch or* (as I think might better be translated) *seize the poor* (that is the poor deluded mortals that fall into his snares); *he doth seize the poor, when he draweth him into his net. In his secret places doth he murder the innocent. Forgetting, that God beholdeth all his ungodliness and wrong; and will in his own time repay it with dreadful vengeance. And therefore, well doth St. Paul admonish, (1 Thess. iv. 6.) That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.*

But still it may be urged, that some men can play with so much prudence and temper as never to engage for more than trifles, consequently to be perfectly unconcerned at any inconsiderable loss that may ensue. True, some men doubtless can do so, and to such, playing for trifles may doubtless be as innocent as any other amusement whatsoever. But how few of these are there in the world, in comparison of those who begin with trifles, and warmed with their losses, are carried on by degrees to boundless extravagance? and even of those who can lose with temper, how many are there, to whom money and time so spent can become an agreeable reflection, and to whom it would not have been infinitely more satisfactory upon reflection, to have employed that time to the attainment of some good purpose in life, or that trifle to the relief of the poor; which, however inconsiderable to the loser, might, to them be of the last consequence? And therefore, although gaming in a low and temperate manner may possibly be numbered among the innocent diversions of life, yet probably it is the most dangerous, and, to the eye of reason, the least desirable of them all.

And if this practice be liable to all these objections and difficulties, under the conduct of the greatest prudence, and calmness of temper, in the best company, and in all the alleviating circumstances that can possibly attend it; how infinitely detestable and abominable must it be in all its deformity in places of public resort, and in the society of the most profligate and abandoned part of mankind; for such, beyond all question, are the herd of common gamesters; men of desperate fortunes, no education, no principles, no conscience, no science, (except that of defrauding all they deal with by all the low arts of deceit and perjury,) engaged in such practices as naturally tend to create quarrels and contentions, with all their horrid consequences, and lead men into riots and excesses of every kind. For surely, of these may it be strictly said, what Solomon observeth of the wicked, in the 4th chapter of his Proverbs. *They sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.* And therefore, for men of liberal education and good morals, men of any valuable character, to mix with such a herd, would be an argument of more desperate folly than for a man in sound health to throw himself into a pest-house; inasmuch as the corruption of the mind is of vastly worse consequence than the infection of the body. And how hard it will be to avoid such corruption from such society is easy to conceive. *Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled therewith?* And therefore Solomon adviseth, not only not to enter into the path of the wicked, but carefully to avoid it. *Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.*

It may be urged in the last place, in behalf of gaming, that many men have raised their fortunes by it. And that since it is not expressly forbidden in the scriptures it may be practised without sin. To this I answer, that although there be no express prohibition of it in scripture, yet it is plainly implied in the tenth commandment. And as to the other part of the objection, it is notorious that a thousand fortunes are ruined by it for one that is raised: so that in this respect,

a particular curse seems to attend it. And surely it is little less than madness, to propose to establish your fortune by any method where the odds are in fact so greatly against you. Besides, that gaming is not in the number of those arts by which God Almighty hath ordained that the good things of this world should be acquired; for these are the natural effects of honesty and industry, in the improvement and application of our best abilities both of body and mind. And if God Almighty had made them ordinarily the purchase of chance and vice, and idleness, he had destroyed the right order of things, and substituted the worst means in the room of the best; and, consequently, taken away much from the wisdom and beauty of his own establishment.

If then, you would avoid a deliberate if not a direct violation of the tenth commandment, together with infinite disquiet and distraction, and the severe reflections of time and fortune ill spent; if you would shun the society of the vilest and most abandoned part of mankind, and the double ruin of soul and body, consequent to such a commerce; if ye would act consistently with those laws of God and man that are the rules of your duty, and that wise order of things established by the divine wisdom for the attainment of the good things of this world, renounce that impious, that absurd, that detestable practice of gaming.

SERMON CXXVIII.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The great Evil, and Folly, and Guilt, of Luxury in Dress.

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

THE next corruption I proposed to guard you against was luxury; and this I shall consider under the two heads of dress and food.

And first for luxury of dress. Dress being intended for distinction of the several orders and stations of life, as well as for ornament and security from the weather, it is no wonder, if in the wiser nations and ages of the world, regulations in this point have been thought worthy the consideration of the legislature, as a matter of great importance to the manners of mankind; to keep the several orders and degrees of men within their own sphere, and their own district; and not suffer them to encroach either upon the character or condition of their superiors. And this, without question, was of excellent use, to temper the minds of mankind, and abate that vanity which so strongly exerts itself in the spirits of most men; or if not abate it, at least direct it to some useful and excellent purpose of life. Thus,

For example, in the commonwealth of Rome, (in all its ages of virtue and discipline,) a Roman knight, with the abilities of an angel, was confined to the equestrian robe and ring. Nor could the wealth and merit of ten senators united in his own person, purchase him any distinction of dress superior to his own order; so that, in this case, either his vanity of wealth and power must subside, or else it must exert itself in such acts of virtue as might raise him to a higher station, and entitle him to nobler ornaments, and badges of more exalted distinction; and this without question was of excellent use. But when luxury increased with wealth and conquest, and vanity abounded as virtue decayed, then did they find out new arts of varying, and adorning, and rendering that dress more luxurious and expensive, which, for fashion and kind, they were under a necessity of continuing still the same. And this luxury of dress, as well as that of food, being found to have very ill effects upon the morals of the citizens, and also to be of very ill consequence to the public, was often regulated by sumptuary laws, which limited the expence of clothing to a determined sum; and such as was not to be exceeded but upon severe penalties. And this again, repressed the exorbitant vanity of mankind, and reduced it, in some measure, within those

bounds and limitations proper to each character and condition in life. And this hath often been practised; more or less, by all wise nations of the world, as the exigency of the times required.

And I believe it must be owned, that if this article of luxury ever needed a restraint in these nations, it needeth it now in the highest degree; and with the utmost severity.

It is but too notorious, that the pride and power of a vain neighbouring nation hath infected the whole world around it with vanities of various kinds: particularly that of light, luxurious, expensive dress; which taking root in a rich nation (like evil weeds in a luxuriant soil) hath over-run it in a monstrous manner, not only to the disgrace of its native modesty and decency, but greatly to the destruction of its true religion and virtue.

There is something in the glare of a gaudy dress that tendeth not only to dissipate the spirits, but even to tincture the mind with congenial vanities, with light fantastic ideas, and specious appearances, and of consequence, to take off the attention from more serious, solid, and important attachments and pursuits; and so become an inlet to the worst vanities that can infect the mind; and this naturally warps men from the ways of truth and virtue: and as this induceth an indisposition to graver and more useful pursuits, it also createth a necessity of greater expence; at the same time that it rebateth that spirit of industry and honest arts which should support it. And what is the consequence, when this love of vanity hath once taken possession of the soul, it must be indulged and supported at all hazards. And as this cannot be done by that industry, and those honest arts which it hath totally driven away, it must be done by evil arts of some kind or other; and often of all kinds.

The history of Gehazi in the 5th chapter of the 2d book of Kings, affordeth a fine illustration of those observations now laid down.

What the true principle and source of his guilt was, will best appear from his punishment; which, being dictated by the spirit of God, was, beyond all doubt, rightly directed.

When Naaman was healed of his le-

prosy, by obeying the directions of the prophet Elisha, he returned in gratitude to acknowledge the obligation, and earnestly intreated the prophet to accept from him some valuable proofs and tokens of his gratitude; which the prophet, having absolutely refused, nevertheless, his servant thought that was an occasion to enrich and adorn himself; which was not by any means to be lost; and therefore he resolved at once to disgrace his master, and in him the religion of his God, to violate the truth, and so defraud Naaman, rather than leave his own vicious appetites undisciplined. Doubtless, he deemed the Syrian garments proper ornaments to adorn his person; and when that was done, the other conveniences of life must be adjusted and suited to them: this consideration made olive-yards and vine-yards but necessary conveniences suited to the other circumstances of his dignity.

The spirit of the prophet attended him through the inmost recesses and windings of his heart, (which plainly demonstrate it to be the spirit of God,) saw clearly into his most secret purposes, and immediately suggested a punishment most admirably accommodated to all the circumstances of his guilt; he inflicted a distemper upon him which made all those vanities useless at once. Syrian ornaments would but ill-become a leprous carcase, and would in effect but make his deformities more conspicuous. And, indulgence of appetite would but more inflame his incurable disease; which must go down to his posterity together with his ill-acquired inheritance.

Good God! how many unhappy Gehazis are there in the world, who trample under foot every duty they owe to God and man, and derive to themselves worse than leprosy, in consequence of their vanities of dress and unruly indulgence of appetite; and convey the taint (but mostly, without the inheritance) to their posterity.

The love of pomp, and glare of dress, is a false and fantastic appetite; and all such are gratified with more difficulty; and not only so, but draw after them many other congenial and vexatious vanities, leading to enormities of every kind.

Gehazi's guilt was a taint that had in-

fect his soul; and it was chastised by an infectious disease that bore an amazing and a dreadful analogy to it.

O my brethren, sin is to the soul, what the worst diseases are to the body; ulcers, and loathsome corruptions of every kind. And the disease now inflicted upon Gehazi, was at once a most lively emblem, and dreadful chastisement of it; at once its shocking picture and punishment. How finely, and how dreadfully instructive is this history to us; and how strictly and religiously should we be upon our guard, lest the inward defilements of our sins should descend like those outward pollutions of Gehazi to our latest posterity, and derive, not only mortal diseases, but immortal miseries upon them.

That the people of this nation, and this city in particular, are over-run with strong appetites and unuly vanities, of various kinds, as Gehazi was; is a truth equally lamentable and notorious.

This my brethren, this is the true source of those pests that infect your cities, and infest your highways. This is the true cause why so many of your sons grow up, not as healthful, but as poisonous plants. *That your daughters grow up, not as the polished corners of your temples,* but as the polluted corners of your cities. This is the true source of that great decay, *that leading into captivity,* and *that complaining in your streets,* far beyond the corruption and calamity of all former ages.

This is the true reason why so many of one sex openly act as if the laws of the gospel were totally reversed to them; forgetting, or entirely neglecting to adorn themselves with *modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.* But on the contrary, glaring in the eyes of the world, *with broidered hair, with gold, and pearls, and costly array;* and an equal contempt of modesty and sobriety.

This is the true reason why all those corruptions which the prophet Ezekiel so loudly crieth out against in Jerusalem, (chap. xxii. xxiii.) are now so flagrant and notorious in this city; and of whose inhabitants (I mean too many of them) we may truly say, as he doth: *in thee have they set light by father and mother.*

In the midst of thee, have they dealt by oppression. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales (and we may add all weapons of violence) to shed blood. In the midst of thee they commit lewdness. Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion; and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold therefore; I have smitten my hand on thy dishonest gain, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee. I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest. They shall strip thee of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels; and they shall deal with thee hatefully. And shall take away all thy labour; and shall leave thee naked and bare.

It appeareth clearly from the course of Ezekiel's prophecy, that the people of Israel had been bewitched by the grandeur, gaiety, and gorgeous apparel of the Chaldeans, to imitate their luxuries, their vanities, and in the end, even their idolatries and abominations of every kind. And after God had, by his prophets, frequently exhorted, admonished, and warned them from those dangerous and deceitful imitations and practices, he at length declareth, that he will totally give them up in the most abject servitude, to the absolute dominion of that nation whose ways they had so wantonly learned, and whose vanities they had so wantonly and wickedly enslaved themselves to, in the fulness of their pride and wealth.

The time is too recent to be yet forgotten, and I hope too memorable to be ever wholly forgotten; since our neighbouring nation, and almost natural enemies, whose vanities we so fondly adopt, and so idly and destructively imitate, had laid a deep and dangerous scheme to oppress us by a sudden and strong invasion, to oppress us unarmed and unprepared; had not God of his infinite and unmerited mercy, timely and most wonderfully interposed, for our preservation, by the destruction of their fleet in their own harbour; by the destruction of the

proud in their own deep waters : which if they had not been so destroyed, would, in all human probability, have gone over our soul.

Here a question naturally occurs ; are we in any degree amended by this deliverance ; by this late deliverance added to many former ? alas, it is but too true that we are not. That we are rather become more abandoned in our abominations ; inasmuch, that we may cry out against this people as the prophet Isaiah did against his own ; *Ah, sinful nation ! a people laden with iniquity ; a seed of evil doers ; children that are corrupters ; they have forsaken the Lord ; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger ; they have gone away backward.*

Why should ye be stricken any more ; ye will revolt more and more : the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it ; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.

My brethren, a natural body in this state hath rarely any relief but from caustics and incisions ; from the sharpest and severest methods of cure. States and communities of men, in the same degree of moral corruption, have rarely any relief, but in moral caustics and incisions ; in chastisements and calamities of the severest kinds. These chastisements, the divine justice, and even the divine mercy, call upon him to inflict ; and nothing but sincere repentance and reformation can avert the vengeance.

My brethren, the leprosy of sin can only be cured as Naaman's was, by washing ; by washing, as Naaman did, not once only, but over and over. By washing seven times ; not in the flood of Jordan, but in the laver of regeneration ; in the stream of pure and purifying repentance.

If you obey the prophet Isaiah, as Naaman did the prophet Elisha, your pollutions shall certainly be done away, as his were. The prescriptions of both prophets are exactly the same, differing only in the means. Elisha prescribed a natural cleansing in Jordan, endued with

a miraculous power by that spirit which inspired the prophet. Isaiah prescribeth a moral cleansing by repentance and amendment, endued with a no less miraculous power by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to well.*

Believe me my brethren, this is the only prescription that can purify guilt ; that can avert the deadly and dreadful consequences of it, even in this world ; and the infinitely more dreadful miseries of the next. This repentance, and this reformation, the only cleansing lenient ; mollifying and healing medicines of moral corruption, he of his infinite mercy pour into our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and redeemer.

SERMON CXXIX.

By PATRICK DELANY, D.D.

The great Evil and Guilt of Luxury in Eating and Drinking.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

ROM. xiii. 13.

Let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

By the *day* in the text is meant the glorious light of the gospel, by which the darkness of the heathen world was dispersed and done away ; and therefore, those vices and irregularities which men indulged in the dark, when the shamefulness and filth of their vile practices were hidden from notice, and from censure, they should now shun and be ashamed of in the sunshine of the gospel ; when the deformity and indecency of such a conduct, could no longer be concealed, could not possibly escape the eye of their own conscience, and the observation and reproach of the whole world around them. *Let us walk honestly*, in the original *εὐσχημονως*, decently, and gracefully, that is, let us live with the utmost regard to

that beauty and becomingness of virtue which will make the conduct of a good Christian lovely in the eyes of all that behold it; even sots of the night are ashamed to expose their freaks and their follies to the eye of day. How much more should the children of the light fear to be in the face of the sun? If the light of the day be a natural restraint upon intemperance and excess, much more should the light of the gospel. If sots of the night revere the light of the sun, how much more should the children of the day revere the sun of righteousness. How much more should they fly from, and be confounded at the sense of those impurities and pollutions which they cannot possibly indulge without bidding defiance to every degree of decency and shame, and doing violence to the tender mercy of God, whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us.

Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

And in order to prevail upon you to do so, the business of this discourse shall be to expose the guilt, the folly, and deformity of luxury and intemperance in eating and drinking, expressed in the text by the terms rioting and drunkenness, or as it is in the original, *καρος και μεθαις*, feastings and sottings. And to this purpose, I shall first shew you what this luxury is; and secondly, I shall endeavour to trace out the evils that attend it.

And in order to find out the true nature of this vice, it is necessary to observe, that whereas food was appointed by Almighty God for our preservation and support; therefore, in order to attain that end more surely and universally, he hath annexed pain and uneasiness to the want of it, in order to excite men to their own preservation; and likewise placed a good deal of pleasure in the gratification of that want; that so we might enjoy our being at the same time that we support it; and be allured so to do.

From hence it comes to pass, that some men, mistaking the true end of food, which is preservation, have placed it entirely in pleasure, and the gratification of appetite; that is, in truth, they have mis-

taken the means for the end, and used them accordingly. Now this is just as weak, as it a sick man should imagine that the virtue of the physic consisted in the gilding and sweetening of the pill, and so should take drugs, not for health, but for pleasure. Now this properly constituteth the idea of luxury; when men, forgetting or disregarding the true end of food, place it entirely in the gratification of appetite. And hence it is, that luxury is the great inducement to intemperance; when men eat to satisfy the demands of nature, they are seldom in danger of excess, because the demands of nature are easily satisfied. But when men eat for pleasure, they eat beyond the demands of nature, and are drawn into all the evils of intemperance. And hence hath proceeded that endless variety of meats and sauces, contrived with so much labour and expence, and with such curious adjustments and compositions of taste, as have erected the art of eating into a science of no mean figure and esteem in the world; and as it is ordinary with mankind to run into endless error, when once they forsake the ways of nature and providence, so hath it happened remarkably in this case. And perhaps the human folly never was carried to greater extravagance than in this article of luxury: witness that mad and incredible profusion we meet with in the lives of the Roman emperors; feasts continued for whole nights and days together; and emetics frequently applied to unload the full stomach and prepare for it new luxury; and all this to obtain a pleasure, which the exercise of a few hours, in innocent recreation, or useful labour, would purchase for them in much greater perfection; and save all that rack of invention that hath been employed in contriving, as well for the expence as poignancy of food. Nor is the folly of this vice more conspicuous on the score of profusion than it is on account of that infirmity of body and mind consequent to it. For it is beyond all question, that he that eateth to luxury doth not feed for health, but for disease. For nature delighteth in simplicity and temperance, and variety of delicious foods oppress the stomach whilst they please the palate; and consequently

must of necessity be thrown off, crude and ill-digested into the world. The body, under the weight of too much food, is just in the case of a flower oppressed with rain; that which was intended to administer to its life and beauty, now serveth only to depress and to deface it. Nor is the mind in a better condition than the body; for when the stomach is overcharged, the spirits are so entirely employed upon the business of digestion, that the mind is left wholly unattended. And indeed nature is not sufficient for two such demands at the same time; being unable to bear the double expence, of ministering at once to reason and to digestion; to reason in its due demands, and to digestion in extravagance. Now all this considered, it is no wonder that luxury hath always been made the mark of a depraved and degenerate age; and that all those that have set up for amending the lives of mankind, and reducing them to the best and most perfect state they were capable of, have always made temperance a fundamental in their regulations. And for the same reason, we are commanded in the scriptures (infinitely the wisest, the most perfect system of philosophy, that ever was formed) to *make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*. The natural demands of hunger and thirst are so strong, that they will not fail to call of themselves for a necessary supply of food, and stand in no sort of need of any artificial incitements or provocatives to appetite; and when these are temperately indulged health is preserved, and both the body and the mind are in a condition to discharge their several functions with vigour. The business of digestion being quickly over, the animal spirits are infinitely at the devotion of the mind, and the student feels no difficulty in his intellectual pursuits; and the man of the world feels no difficulty in application and attention to his business from the weight of fulness and stupidity of indigestion. The body likewise, having taken in no more food than the necessities of nature called for, can lay up no supplies either for vices or diseases; and by this means, many of those evils are prevented to which fulness naturally leadeth, and to which so inactive and sedentary a condition of life

as students, citizens, and many men of various occupations are generally engaged in, would otherwise render them too obnoxious.

It hath been finely observed of intemperate eating, that if it had been appointed as a punishment, he had been reckoned a more than ordinary tyrant that invented it. And yet surely, the evils that such a one would bring upon mankind, were light and inconsiderable, in comparison of those which mankind bring upon themselves by luxury of food; for the pain of forced fulness would quickly be over, either from nature's refusing to bear the burden any longer, or from artificial reliefs; whereas, the ill effects of luxury increase with our years, and for the most part, continue with our lives; so that the difference is here; the tyrant might torment you for a little time with forced fulness; whereas, luxury tempteth you to torment yourselves for the best part of your lives.

Again, as temperance enableth both the body and mind to discharge their several offices with ease and satisfaction, so also doth it help to redeem a considerable portion of our time for that discharge. Sleep is the natural relief of toil and weariness: that is, when the animal spirits are exhausted by the labours of the day, men naturally fall into that state of rest and insensibility which we call sleep; that during that season, the body may have a sufficient recruit of spirits for the labours of the ensuing day. But when the weight of fulness and indigestion are added to the other labours of life, and a man goeth to bed, not only to recover his wasted spirits, but to get rid of an incumbered brain, and a loaded stomach, it is evident the business of sleep is doubled; and a man must of necessity rest much longer, than he otherwise should need to do. And this is the only natural, and true way of accounting for some men's invincible sluggishness, and that strange difficulty that is found in forcing them to the early duties of life, especially in their younger years, when their spirits abound, and consequently the waste is easier recruited.

What I have here observed concerning luxury of food, I would have understood as well of luxury in drinks, as in

meats; because that is at least equally pernicious. And since all drinking, as well as eating for pleasure, abstracted from the demands and ends of nature, the support of health and strength, the enjoyment of social, temperate, and innocent festivity, and the necessary relief of care: I say all eating and drinking abstracted from these ends, properly constitute the idea of luxury; and are at the same time, the vices of drunkenness and intemperance. Therefore I shall consider this kind of drinking, in the remaining part of this discourse, under that head.

And indeed, intemperate drinking is the most dangerous of all vices you can possibly fall into; and for this plain reason, because that by this you are put into the power of every other vice. So that we may say of this, as of the evil spirit in the gospel, it is not a single vice but it is a legion. And hence it is, that when the apostle exhorteth us, to *walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness*: he immediately addeth, *not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying*. These vices being the natural effects of luxury and intemperance, by which the blood is inflamed, the head disturbed, and the heart perverted; and men become a prey to every temptation, and every folly in life. And as this is true of mankind in every period, it is more remarkably so in youth. For although sottishness be more shameful and indecent in old age, it is more dangerous and pernicious in youth; and for this plain reason, youth is itself a drunkenness, that is, there is a giddiness and a fervour that attend it, apt enough of themselves to throw you into too many extravagancies; and God knows there is no need of any artificial or additional inflammation to your blood at that period. You are already, from the condition of your constitution at that period, too much in the power of your passions; and it is by no means your interest to inflame them to boundless sway; but quite otherwise, to restrain them by the united force of reason and abstinence.

The business of reason and religion, of education and discipline, is to calm and cool the passions; the business of riot and drunkenness, is to inflame and boil them up to tenfold extravagance.

Hence all that variety of wild and irrational pursuits and projects, which at once depress and dishonour our nature, mad mirth, senseless and sottish fondness, causeless quarrels, vain and wicked vaunts, open and avowed licentiousness, and an utter defiance of God and goodness.

Solomon hath summed up the train of extravagance and evil adventures such men run through in the course of a drunken revel, with admirable beauty and great exactness, in the 23d chapter of his proverbs 29th and following verses: *Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine. It is in the original they that seek mixture, that is, they who mingle drinks of several sorts to render them at once more alluring and more intoxicating. He then addeth that excellent advice to his son: Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup. When it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea thou shalt be as he that leth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. And then followeth a greater evil and infatuation than all the rest. When I shall awake, I shall seek it yet again; notwithstanding all the dangers the sot ran through, and the indignities he endured in his riot, yet no sooner doth he awake, but he runneth the same round of folly and extravagance over again. The drunkard is emphatically the fool in the Proverbs, who returneth to his folly as the dog to his vomit. He hath no sooner slept off, or heaved off one surfeit, but he swalloweth down another. Again he beholdeth strange women, and again he uttereth perverse things, until he end in fevers or phrenzies; or fall a sacrifice to a freak, or die by the sword of his dearest companion; murdering perhaps, and murdered at once; and goeth down quick to perdition, where only he can meet with greater monsters, and more abandoned reprobates*

than those he left behind him, whose conversation he is now best fitted for, by a long course of impiety and profaneness, and the worst abuse of the patience and long-suffering of Almighty God.

The business of reason and religion (as I before observed) is to improve and perfect our nature, to raise it to its original excellency; to fit us for the conversation of angels, and arch-angels, and the spirits of good men made perfect. But the business of riot and intemperance is to sink us gradually into destruction, to debase and to deprave; to debase us into brutes, and to deprave us into fiends; to fit us for the society of hell.

Orpheus torn to pieces by Bacchanals, is a fine emblem of the ruin of every thing that is good and amiable by riot and excess. Every passion inflamed by wine is a mad Bacchanal, at mortal enmity with art and elegance and the harmony of the mind. Every ornament and accomplishment of the soul must one day fall before it, must one day fall by the fate of Orpheus, and perish piece-meal. And, to crown all, besides the ill consequences that drunkenness hath in common with other evil habits, it hath this dreadful effect peculiar to itself, that a long habit in this vice may make it at last necessary. Nor can those who have long indulged it, ordinarily live without it. And what a dreadful reflection is it to think, that we have lived so in the world as to make our vices necessary to our very being.

I will add one observation more; and that is, that it is the vice of all others that doth the greatest dishonour to human nature. We think it argument enough against other vices that they debase us to brutes; but this doth more, it putteth us vastly beneath them. And a swine wallowing in the mire is not half so hateful, nay, not half so beastly a sight as a drunkard in his own excesses.

It was a practice with the Spartans to expose their slaves drunk to the sight of the ingenuous youth, to deter them from so shameful a vice, by so sad an example; and no doubt nothing could strike the mind with abhorrence of such a brutal practice like such a sight: but still methinks it was too great an indig-

nity to be put even upon the Helotæ, upon the lowest and meanest rank of human slaves! nay, it were beyond all question, an indignity even upon a brute of better species; and if so, how scandalous must this practice be, how shameful beyond all reproach, in men! in creatures that value themselves upon the use of reason, and the advantages of religion.

I have omitted in this discourse, or rather, have not insisted upon, some of the common topics against drunkenness, and indeed I hope the stupidity, the infamy, the brutality of this vice, added to the inflammation and outrage of every passion occasioned by it, and being thrown into the power of every other vice, when it is in possession of you, will be abundantly sufficient to dissuade and deter you from the practice of it.

I cannot conclude upon this subject, without admonishing my hearers, that of all the various sorts of sottishness, that of going early to the wine is surely the greatest and the most unpardonable. The pretence of this practice, is drinking to get an appetite; but the true purpose of it, is drinking to destroy it; and is doubtless one of the most pernicious practices that ever obtained among mankind. Other sots redeem some portion of their time to their duty, but morning drunkards sacrifice the whole. Here intemperance subdueth by surprise, and maketh speedy progress from one degree to another, till riot succeed to excess, and every folly and every vice succeed to riot; till sottishness subdue itself, and stupidity is oppressed by sleep. Thus time, health, and fortune, are wasted at once; and industry, wealth, and virtue give way to sloth and poverty, and all the infinite evils that await them.

Give me leave to add one short reflection to what hath been said, and so conclude.

The festival of our blessed Saviour's nativity hath succeeded in the same season of the year with the ancient Saturnalia, an heathen feast, instituted in memory of the golden age, which flourished as they deemed under the reign of Saturn; when all mankind lived in freedom, and ease and plenty; and the distinctions of bond and free, of tyrant and slave, were unknown. In this season, masters

forgot their tyranny, and servants threw off their chains; and an image of the original ease, festivity, and freedom, was exhibited to the world. When Christianity was established in the place of heathenism, it quickly came to be understood that true liberty was now restored with it; that mankind were now redeemed from the slavery of sin and Satan, and restored to the original freedom of the sons of God. From hence, they quickly came to be considered upon the foot of their natural relation and original equality; that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, or Scythian, bond or free; but a new creature.

Those who were before aliens and enemies now became brethren, sons of the same first parents, servants of the same God, and heirs of the same salvation. In this way of thinking, tyrants threw down their scourges, and slaves shook off their chains. The consequence of which was, ease and equanimity among the lower part of mankind; condescension, humanity, beneficence, and charity among the higher; and love, joy, innocent festivity, and freedom among all. How blessed a scene was this, and how noble a picture of the original simplicity, felicity, and equality, was exhibited to the earth!

This was the festival of Christmas in its original institution; then were the house, the board, the arms, and the heart open to the stranger, the friendless, the fatherless, and the widow; and the poor tenant was welcomed and levelled with his lord. Alas! these happy times are now vanished; the great era of the Christian redemption is now remembered in nothing but the name: that spirit of irreligion which is gone out into the world, together with its vile and genuine offspring, the sordid, selfish, insatiable spirit of avarice and private luxury have either devoured or driven away the generous and the God-like spirit of public hospitality, attended with innocent and social mirth. Or, if there be any remains of the ancient and hospitable festivity, they are, for the most part, such only as are seen in the revels of those

who, at St. Peter expresseth it, take pleasure to riot in the day time, spots they are and blemishes in these feasts of love, and bring reproach and infamy upon this sacred and solemn festival. *Having eyes full of adultery, beguiling unstable souls, alluring through the lusts of the flesh. Through much wantonness those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise liberty they themselves are the servants of corruption.* These are they upon whom the woes and vengeance of God are justly and peculiarly denounced in the sacred writings. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, (saith the prophet) woe unto them that are mighty to drink strong drink, that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night till wine inflame them. And the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands. Therefore hell hath enlarged itself, and opened her mouth without measure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement, for time mispent, and for talents misapplied; for health impaired and life cut short; for the ends of infinite wisdom defeated and inverted; for the best blessings of life converted into a curse; either cruelly withheld from all the duties and delights of charity, or more cruelly wasted in licentiousness for the propagation of evil principles and the infection of evil example; in one word, for the best gifts of God, either diverted from their true ends or abused to the worst. For all these things God will bring thee into judgement. His just vengeance will await thee in this world, and pursue thee into the next; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. From this dreadful doom, and unutterable woe, God of his infinite mercy deliver us all, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.*

SERMON CXXX.

By GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

Dean of Canterbury, and President of St. Mary
Magdalen College, Oxford.

The Character of true Wisdom, and
the Means of attaining it.

Prov. iv. 7.

Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get
wisdom: and with all thy getting, get under-
standing.

THE sage instructor of the world, from
the eminence on which Providence had
placed him, surveys mankind. Discon-
tented with themselves, and their present
condition, he beholds them engaged in
the pursuit of something that still flies be-
fore them. Pleasure, wealth, and power,
appear in their view, and solicit their at-
tention. Grieved to see time mispent in
quest of things perishable, and labour
lost on that which either may not be ob-
tained, or, when obtained, may disap-
point in enjoyment all the hopes excited
by expectation, he raises his voice, and
wishes it to be heard to the ends of the
earth. He calls men off from a fruitless
chace after objects attained with diffi-
culty, and possessed without satisfaction;
he points out one adequate to all their
efforts; one, in the pursuit of which no
time can be mispent, no labour can be
lost; one, which presents itself a fair
mark, to be always hit by the quick eye
and the steady hand; one, that may be
surely gained by genius and diligence,
and when gained, is productive of plea-
sure, riches, and honour; pleasure
which fadeth not away, riches which
none can take from the happy possessor,
and the honour which cometh from God
only. Solomon found, if men were dis-
posed to be contented with any thing, it
was that with which they never should be
contented—their ignorance. He exhorts
them to learn: *Wisdom is the principal
thing, therefore get wisdom: and with
all thy getting, get understanding.*

The subject will best be laid before you,
in its several branches, by considering,
what it is we are enjoined to acquire;

how we are to acquire it; and why we
are to acquire it.

First, then, we will consider the nature
of that which we are so earnestly enjoined
to acquire.

All the divine learning upon earth is
contained in the books of the Old and
New Testament, which are written in
Hebrew and Greek: those languages
therefore, with the Latin, must be stu-
died; and the study of them falls within
the department of human learning.

Enough of divine learning, perhaps
it will be urged, may be gathered from
translations for all the purposes re-
quired. But to whom are we indebted
for translations, unless to those who
by good and sufficient learning became
qualified for the work? And as they,
however worthy and able, were yet very
far from infallible, it will frequently
happen, in points of difficulty, that we
can neither sufficiently establish our own
faith, nor confute the arguments of the
adversary, without recurring to the
originals. The adversary, to serve his
turn, will recur to them; and what will
become of us, if we are not able to follow
him?

The history of the people of God
cannot be understood, without taking
with us that of pagan states, particularly
of the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and
Roman empires. An exact acquaintance
with what has been passing in the world,
since the extinction of the last, cannot
be dispensed with in a commentator on
the prophecies, particularly those in the
Revelation. To adjust the situation of
places, and the succession of times, we
must call to our assistance the sciences of
geography, chronology, and astronomy.
Nor can the proportions of the temple
and its furniture, described in the books
of Kings and Chronicles, and afterward
referred to by Ezekiel and St. John, be
well comprehended and ascertained,
without something of mathematics and
mechanics. Thus necessary is a know-
ledge of languages and sciences, to inter-
pret the letter of scripture, the source of
doctrines and precepts, the foundation of
all improvements moral and spiritual,
and they must ever be the best interpreters,
who have the largest share of them.
The advantage of a superior skill we may

truly say, none have exceeded those in our own country.

In a public education, the means and instruments necessary for the acquisition of learning are possessed in a more full and complete manner. The master can give his time and his thoughts wholly to the work : constant and long experience confers a degree of skill not otherwise to be attained. A spirit of emulation is excited in the scholar, who goes on with more sprightliness and alacrity in the company of his school-fellows, forgetting those that are behind, and pressing forward to those who are before, with the determination of a Cæsar, that nothing is yet done, while any thing remains to be done. A regular succession of business, at stated times, inures him to live by rule, and forbids him to be idle ; while the discipline by which it is enforced, renders him healthy and hardy in mind and body. By being put so soon to manage and bustle for himself, he is prepared for the world into which he must enter, and in which he must pass his days ; the various tempers and dispositions of his numerous companions bring him acquainted with those of mankind, among whom he is to pass them ; and he forms connections, which, by banishing selfishness, by exchanging offices of friendship, by mutual assistance and communication of studies, as well as in many other ways, contribute towards his passing them with pleasure and emolument. If all who are engaged in the superintendence of our public seminaries could only bestow equal attention on the learning and morals of those under their care, so that they might go forth (and such, you will all bear me witness, have lately gone forth from hence) good men as well as good scholars, the dispute between the patrons of public and private education would be, perhaps, in great measure, at an end.

Respecting the method of school instruction at present in use among us, it is one which has been long tried, and found successful ; witness those great and shining characters, formed under its auspices, which adorn our annals ; nor have its adversaries yet been able to propose another, liable, upon the whole, to fewer objections.

The observations made by an excellent

writer on the plan proposed by the great Milton, are too valuable not to be recited to you upon the present occasion :

“ The purpose of Milton, as it seems, “ was to teach something more solid than “ the common literature of schools, by “ reading those authors that treat of “ physical subjects, such as the *Georgic* “ and astronomical treatises of the an- “ cients. But the truth is, that the “ knowledge of external nature, and of “ the sciences which that knowledge re- “ quires or includes, is not the great or “ the frequent business of the human “ mind. Whether we provide for action “ or conversation, whether we wish to be “ useful or pleasing, the first requisite is “ the religious and moral knowledge of “ right and wrong ; the next is an ac- “ quaintance with the history of man- “ kind, and with those examples which “ may be said to embody truth, and “ prove, by events, the reasonableness of “ opinions. Prudence and justice are “ virtues of all times, and of all places ; “ we are perpetually moralists, but we “ are geometricians only by chance.— “ Our intercourse with intellectual na- “ ture is necessary ; our speculations “ upon matter are voluntary and at lei- “ sure. Physical knowledge is of such “ rare emergence, that one man may “ know another half his life, without be- “ ing able to estimate his skill in hydros- “ tatics or astronomy ; but his moral and “ prudential character immediately ap- “ pears. Those authors therefore are to “ be read at schools that supply most “ axioms of prudence, most principles of “ moral truth, and most materials for con- “ versation : and these purposes are best “ answered by poets, orators, and histo- “ rians.”

Some have thought, that as we are now furnished with translations of the an- cient classical authors, we may spare ourselves the trouble of learning their languages. Were the question only concerning matters of fact, it might be deemed perhaps of little importance to consider by what means we come at the knowledge of them, so that we do but obtain the truth ; though, by the way, whether in particular instances we have obtained it, can often only be known (as was observed before in the case of the

scriptures) by consulting the originals. But there is much more in the matter: the writers of Greece and Rome are our masters in style and composition; with relation to which, the spirit of every piece will evaporate in the transfusion. Next in value to knowledge, is the mode of communicating it with ease and propriety. They who have studied the best writers of antiquity with this view, will always themselves be the best writers in any other language. When these shall cease to be regarded as our models, elegant simplicity and manly energy will give place to a false glare of affectation and refinement; loose and licentious tenets will be tricked out in the meretricious garb of false eloquence. A vitiated taste in writing, like that which preceded the decline and downfal of the Roman empire, will precede our own. Tacitus and Seneca will be imitated, rather than Cæsar and Cicero: epithet, point, and antithesis, will prevail; and we shall prepare for slavery, by "babbling a dialect of France."

Nothing could tend more to accelerate a catastrophe of this kind, than the adoption of that system of toppery and immorality recommended by a late noble author, enamoured almost to distraction of the language and manners of our neighbours upon the continent. Learning and religion would then no longer make a part in the education of our youth. One would be banished under the notion of pedantry, the other excluded by the name of superstition. Travel and a knowledge of the world, it seems, may supply the place of both. To know the world, is doubtless expedient; in some circumstances, necessary. But a man should know many other things before he enters upon that study, or he will do well not to enter upon it at all. Let him lay in a stock, and that no moderate one, of useful learning and sound principles, ere he set out upon his travels, or he will be little the better for having seen the world, though the world may be somewhat the merrier for having seen him. If he go out an ignorant, he will come home a profligate, with the atheist ingrafted upon the blockhead. As to the business of the

graces, before the gloss can be given, a substance must be prepared to receive it; and solid bodies take the brightest polish.

From what has been said, you will perhaps be induced to think, that in times like these, and in a matter of such importance, projects of innovation are dangerous things. We know what we are to lose; let us be well informed what we are to gain, lest we should be led to exchange an old system with some defects, for a new one with many more: defects which are of little consequence, for defects which are of very great consequence indeed to the general state of learning, and the constitution of our country.—Reformation was the word in the last century, and one was at length effected, which swept away schools and universities, with the government civil and ecclesiastical. The revenues allotted to the support of cathedrals and these their appendages, were seized, with a view to augment the smaller livings. But mark the event—When the estates were sold, the presbyterian ministers who had taken possession of the livings, and expected the augmentation, were told, to their utter astonishment, that the money was wanted to support public credit. It was wanted, and it was applied accordingly; all was then overwhelmed by a deluge of enthusiasm, and illiterate fanaticism. The deluge which now threatens us is one of another kind, but not a whit less formidable.

Thus much for the wisdom we are exhorted to acquire, and the method of acquiring it. A few words shall be said, and they shall be but few, in the

Third and last place, upon the advantages attending such acquisition, to the individual himself, and to the community.

To the individual, wisdom is indeed, as Solomon properly styles it, *the principal thing*. The seat of its residence is in the noblest part of the human composition; and that noble part it renders still more noble. What else gives to man the superiority over brutes; to angels over man: and to the Omnipotent over all his creatures? *The Lord*

is a God of knowledge (1 Sam. ii. 3.); and wisdom was with him from eternity. (Prov. viii. 22. Wisdom, ix. 9.)

The pleasures of wisdom exceed all others, in kind, degree, and duration, far as heaven is higher than earth. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* (Prov. iii. 17.)

A studious disposition makes those who are blessed with it valuable, good, and happy. It enables them to find a paradise in solitude, and profitably as well as agreeably to fill up the intervals of business. It renders them little sensible to the allurements of external objects, to those trifles and improprieties which disgrace the man, and degrade the Christian. The ill-instructed and unemployed are the persons whose imagination is always wandering and afloat.—For want of solid nourishment, their curiosity and their appetites turn to objects either vain or dangerous; and hence proceed all those inventions for squandering away thought and time, which generally end in a forgetfulness of God and ourselves. It is incredible what inconveniences are avoided by those who can pass their vacant hours with books and their own thoughts. “Happy,”—says a prelate, in his day the admiration and delight of mankind, I mean the accomplished archbishop of Cambray,—“happy they, who are disgusted with violent pleasures, and know how to be pleased with the sweets of an innocent life. Happy they who delight in instruction, and find a satisfaction in cultivating their minds with knowledge. Into whatever situation adverse fortune may throw them, they always carry entertainment with them; and the disquiet, which prays on others in the midst of pleasures, is unknown to those who can employ themselves in reading. Happy they, who love to read!” Let it be added, that this happiness is one which the world does not give, so neither can the world take away. It will never leave us, but continue a fast and firm friend, when every other pleasure shall have forsaken us. Wisdom will comfort us in the day of sorrow, and support us in the hour of

death. Like the holy ark accompanying the camp of Israel, she will go with us over Jordan, and conduct us to our inheritance in the land of promise. *Exalt her*, says the Wise Man, in the words immediately following my text, *exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her; she shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*

To a community the advantages of wisdom are many and great. A nation glories not less in the learning than in the valour of her sons. Long and illustrious is the train of literary heroes, which Britain beholds with an honest and conscious pride, who from age to age have filled the most exalted stations in church and state, or presided in the different departments of science, or from the shades of an honourable and lettered retirement, sent forth their writings for the entertainment and instruction of mankind.

My younger brethren, the hope of the rising generation, our future joy and crown, all these were men like yourselves, trained in the same course of education. Think of their examples, and emulate their fame. The trophies of Miltiades, you know, would not suffer Themistocles to sleep. Hear the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus upon this subject, in a chapter read constantly at our universities, on the days appointed for a solemn commemoration of founders and benefactors: *Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them, through his great power, from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies: leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people; wise and eloquent in their instructions. All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times. Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore. While the world shall last, and any regard be paid to that which deserves regard, the people will tell*

of their wisdom, and the congregation will shew forth their praise. (Eccclus. xlv.)

If therefore there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things, meditate on them, give yourselves wholly to them. Time is on the wing. It flies, to return no more. Seize the moments as they pass, and employ them to the best advantage. Lose not the golden opportunity, the sweet hour of prime, the morning of youth, health, and strength. Conquer the difficulties at first setting out, and all will be pleasure ever after. Labour now, and comfortable will be your rest, when the season of labour shall be over. *For glorious is the fruit of labour, and the root of wisdom shall never fall away.* (Wisdom, iii. 15.) Let the sanctity of your manners keep pace with the improvement of your minds. To your governors be respectful and obedient; to your companions gentle and loving; to all courteous and obliging. And that the divine blessing may be upon you in what you do, remember to begin and end your studies with prayer. *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.* (James, i. 5.) Let him ask that, as the son of David did, and all things else, judged proper for him, shall be added to it. (1 Kings, iii. 11.) Pray therefore that God would give you wisdom that sitteth by his throne, and reject you not from among his children; that he would send her out of his holy heavens, and from the throne of his glory, that bring present, she may labour with you, that you may know what is pleasing unto him. *For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead you soberly in your doings, and preserve you by her power.* So shall your works be acceptable. (Wisdom, ix. 4, 10, &c.) in the sight of heaven and earth, bringing glory to God, credit to your instructors, comfort to your friends, honour to yourselves, and benefit to your country.

SERMON CXXXI.

By THOMAS NEWLIN, M.A.

Fellow of Magdalen College in Oxford.

The Esteem, that attends the constant Practice of Virtue.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at Magdalen College, on St. John Baptist's Day, 1713.]

ST. MARK, vi. 20.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy—

ST. John the Baptist having constantly spoken the truth, and boldly rebuked vice, (to complete his character) had the honour of suffering for the truth's sake.

His strict and inflexible justice, his ardent zeal for the glory of God, and his avowed hatred of sin, stirred up a powerful enemy against him, and provoked the keen resentment of Herodias, who was engaged in a vicious alliance with Herod, and had therefore a mighty influence over him. We may reasonably believe that the preacher of repentance had frequently alarmed her conscience with unacceptable reproofs, and quickened it with a sense of guilt, and an expectation of vengeance; she that had been accustomed to hear only smooth things (Isa. xxx. 10.), was unable to bear his ingenuous behaviour, (which she called presumption), and resolved to leave nothing undone, till she had wrought her revenge upon him: she used all the arts of insinuation and methods of address, which were likely to win upon Herod, the partaker of her sins; and since their cause was the same, and the supposed injury was common to both, it might be imagined, that he would be as ready to take away the life of St. John, as she was to desire this gratification of her passion; that she could not make a more agreeable request, and that he only waited for an opportunity of granting it.

* The great scarcity of these Sermons, as well as their excellence, has induced the Editor to insert them in this collection.

But the Holy Scriptures assure us, that though *she had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, she could not.* For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy.—(Mark, vi. 19, 20.)

The rays of divine goodness in St. John, shone with an awful lustre; and the beauty of holiness recommended itself, even to Herod, notwithstanding that his favourite lusts pleaded earnestly against it, and Herodias was always at hand, endeavouring to hinder its efficacy by her importunate complaints, and ensnaring suggestions.

She did at last, indeed, surprise the adulterer into a compliance, by the pleasing artifices of her daughter, and obtained a general grant, when he was best disposed to hearken to any demand.

He that had observed his impartial reprover, and when he heard him, did many things, and heard him gladly (Mark, vi. 20.), he was not aware of the ill use that was afterwards made of the advantage that he had rashly given against him; and as soon as he perceived it, he repented of it.

Though he freely promised to gratify the daughter of Herodias, with whatsoever she could ask, *even to the half of his kingdom* (Mark, v. 23.), he was yet grieved, when she asked for the head of John the Baptist: *The king was exceeding sorry, yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.* (Mark, v. 26.) He would have receded from his promise, had he not mistaken the force of the obligation, for he valued the life of this just and holy man more than *even the half of his kingdom.*

From hence we may raise this observation, That integrity gains the esteem, even of the vicious and profane, and constrains them to reverence the man that goes on in a steady course of righteousness.

And this may be derived from the following reasons:

First, From the established notions, and natural sense of good and evil;

Secondly, From the excellence, and superiority which virtue has over vice;

Thirdly, From the likeness it bears to the divine attributes;

Fourthly, From the beautiful simplicity of truth and innocence; and,

Lastly, From the impartial judgment which wicked men make of things, in their sober intervals, and whenever they are brought to themselves.

And first, It may be derived from the established notions, and natural sense of good and evil. As men are distinguished from the rest of the creation, by one common principle of reason, so they all form the same conceptions of vice and virtue, before they are tainted with error, or misled by the corruption of their nature. The lines of their duty, are so deeply engraven on their minds, that they cannot utterly erase them, unless their whole frame were also to be dissolved. They may indeed sully the light of reason, and partly wear away the impression that was made upon them. And whilst many retain a just abhorrence of evil, others may endeavour to deceive themselves by embracing a more favorable opinion of it. But yet they have some glimmering imperfect knowledge, to accuse and upbraid them with folly; and though they would cover it with a specious appearance, by *calling evil good, and good evil* (Isa. v. 20.), yet they cannot so prevent their faculties as to support their vain glorious boasting, with a suitable belief, and think that these things are just as they represent them. Though their wills are depraved and engaged in behalf of sin, yet their judgments cannot so contradict, and be the reverse of themselves. They may be over-ruled, but will still serve to render them self condemned, and to justify the conduct of the righteous.

They would fain conceal this their approbation, and silence their thoughts, with loud laughter, and confident railery; but their first sense of things, though not lively enough to be the principle of their own actions, will yet oblige them to pay some regard to those that have acted up to their duty.

And the nature of vice and virtue is not to be changed by their sinful desires, or become subservient to their inclinations; but the marks that are stamped upon them will last for ever, and the difference between them is too wide to be closed. There is a fixed standard of true

worth and goodness, and it is not left to be determined by the uncertain opinions, or the arbitrary wills of men, but it is every where the same; and virtue is thought praiseworthy, as vice passes for a term of infamy and reproach; and we are constrained to judge thus of it; and at the first mention of any act of piety, charity, or self-denial, our minds are pleased with it, and glow with a generous emulation: for we know, that it is warranted by right reason, and by the authority of an all-wise God. When we behold a man beset with temptations, and getting the mastery over them, and subduing himself; when we observe him sacrificing his interest to his duty, and hazarding all that is dear to him in this world, rather than let go his integrity; we presently frame an idea of greatness superior to earthly kingdoms and all their fading glories: and he that in the course of his life is steady in performing the service of God, and never stoops to any sinful compliance, is happy in the esteem of all that know him. Every one yields his approbation, and envy dares not cavil at, or detract from him. Even those profligate wretches, that have abandoned religion and thrown up their pretensions to it, cannot but entertain a just opinion of him: and as often as they look into themselves, and take a view of their own case, they wish that their *last end may be like his* (Numb. xxiii. 10); and they even wish that their life were also like his. They are lost to an affecting sense of the joys and comforts of religion; but still it extorts a veneration from them; and they are sometimes forced to reflect as creatures endued with reason.

And the esteem which naturally follows integrity, is derived,
Secondly, From the excellence and superiority that virtue has over vice; and this is infinitely great, and appears at the first view to all that consider it: the former is the perfection, the latter the corruption of nature: and look how different the glory of the angels of God is from the shame of those accursed spirits, that were cast down from the mansions of bliss, into the land of darkness, almost so different is the state of the righteous

from that of the wicked. Behold our first parent walking in the garden of Eden, unspeakably happy in his unsullied innocence; and behold one of his wretched posterity, sold into the slavery of sin, and under the dominion of his unruly affections: in one we see the disgrace and ignominy of vice; in the other the dignity of virtue.

Nay, we may descend lower than this; and if we compare the condition of the best of men with that of the worm that crawleth upon the ground, we shall find there is a yet greater distance between the just and holy man and the vicious and profane, than between the most perfect of mankind and this mean contemptible creature: for this has kept its appointed place, and fulfils the will of its Creator; whereas the sinner is fallen from his high station, and is become despicable to himself. He that has maintained his integrity, knows that he is endued with a noble greatness of mind, that he is answering the design of his Maker, and is *running the race which is set before him*. (Heb. xii. 1.)

He examines his past actions with inexpressible satisfaction, and delights to observe the beautiful order of his nature; his conscience possessed of its due authority, his reason seated in its throne, and his will and affections paying a cheerful obedience.

And all that live under the influence of his example, second the testimony that his own heart gives him, and ratify his just approbation. His advice is as a law to them, and they study to please him, by an equal regard to their duty: as Job speaks of himself; *unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel; after my words they spoke not again, and my speech dropped upon them*. (Job, xxix. 21, 22.)

But the man that forgets the dignity of his nature, and descends to the commission of a sin, is conscious that he has done an injury to his faculties, and an action that is a disgrace to him, which he shall call himself a fool ever. He is abashed at the remembrance of it, and confounded at the undervalued thought; and whilst he has any value for his honour, he would be ignorant (if

possible) of his sin, shut out himself from being a spectator of it, and would not that his left hand should know what his right hand doth. (Matt. vi. 3.)

And much more is he afraid of the just and holy man; for his integrity is a reproof to him; it cuts him to the heart with a sense of his shame, puts him in mind of the glory that he has forfeited, and brings his reason and conscience to witness against him. His established virtue rebukes him, like those faithful monitors, and by shewing him how he ought to live, condemns him for not living as he ought.

When innocence appears, vice is ashamed and would conceal itself, as the multitude of sinners will desire to do at the last day, when they shall not be able to lift up their heads to behold *the son of righteousness* (Mal. iv. 2.) coming forth in his full strength, and his *saints sitting on thrones to judge the world*. (Luke, xxii. 30.)

There needs no loud declamation against vice, when virtue displays itself with boldness; its presence checks the confidence of sin; and the sinner looks down with confusion of face: his guilt reproves itself, and cries out, in the words of Ahab, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* (1 Kings, xxi. 20.) He is seized with a prevailing awe, and his mouth is stopped while the godly are in his sight. Hence it is, that the patrons of irreligion suspend the commission of their beloved iniquity in the presence of a good man.

They forbear for a while the language of blasphemy and profaneness, and by an involuntary veneration, are withheld from evil. Were they in the company of those that are equally regardless of God, they could glory in their wickedness, and vaunt themselves against the Most High. But they dare not be thus vile before the man of integrity, whose frowns are terrible to them, and who chastises them for their impiety, barely by not partaking with it. Before such a witness, they take up the profession of religion, and would borrow the reputation that certainly attends it. And this respect which righteousness commands, arises.

Thirdly, from the likeness it bears to

the divine attributes. It is a token of God's especial presence, that sheds a glory upon him, that daily aspires to a nearer resemblance of his holiness. Every good action is a copy of one or other of those perfections which God has manifested to us; and he that is distinguished by an unmoveable resolution to do his duty; and by repeated conquests of the most inviting temptations, has something truly great and godlike in him, that engages our observation and bestows our esteem; and those faithful servants of God, that are adorned with the beams of his goodness, are also clothed with majesty; and it is their defence and protection: for even their enemies see *certainly that the Lord is with them*, (Gen. xxvi. 28.), and desire to be joined in the same interests, that they may partake of God's blessing. It was this that obtained mercy for Joseph, when he was falsely accused, and cast into prison; and this, together with the working of God's providence, gave him *favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison*. (Gen. xxxix. 21.) This preserved his chosen people, and suffered no man to do them wrong, as they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people. (Psal. cv. 13, 14, 15.), for God did by this, as it were, speak unto them, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*. And they that have designed to injure the righteous man, and been armed with power to execute their purpose, have been prevented by a surprizing dread, which has bid them *have nothing to do with that just man*. (Matt. xxvii. 19.) The thought of the intended villainy has shocked them; and his invincible virtue has taken away the strength of their resolutions. And they were astonished as Jacob was, when he awaked out of his sleep, and said, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not; how dreadful is this place? This is none other but the home of God; this is the gate of heaven*. (Gen. xxviii. 17.) When integrity has stood unshaken against the utmost efforts of the ungodly, their hatred is vanquished; and they do justice to him that has maintained it, with *certainly this is a righteous man*. (Luke,

xxiii. 47.) A powerful sinner has been afraid of his bold reprover, and a licentious judge has trembled before his prisoner. For religion disarms and strikes an awe upon its enemies; and it dazzles and confounds them as *the light from heaven* did St. Paul, as he was journeying to Damascus (Acts, ix. 3.) to persecute the church of God.

It is a lively proof of God's power over the minds of men, that, even they that hate him, cannot withhold the respect and esteem that are due to the resemblance of him; and as soon as they see his *image and superscription*, they cannot but *render unto God the things that are God's*. (Matt. xxii. 20, 21.)

And the most obstinate prejudice is pierced through by the beautiful simplicity of truth and innocence, which is,

Fourthly, to be considered. How much soever mankind may disagree in other matters; how unwilling soever they may be to agree in this; yet they, with one consent, acknowledge the excellence of truth, and the real worth of innocence. Sincerity gains access, by its natural efficacy; it needs no arts to recommend it; but is therefore most acceptable, because it is without art or design.

There is no character more desirable, more generally beloved, than that of a plain honest man; it enters into the hearts of all with an irresistible force, like the gospel of Christ, which obtained a ready assent to itself, by its glaring evidence: it was not set off with a pompous shew of eloquence, or the *enticing words of man's wisdom* (1 Cor. ii. 4.); but trusted to its own power, and appeared, as it really was, in a simple unaffected narration.

An impartial regard to truth, and a steadfast resolution of doing our duty, are infinitely more valuable in themselves, than all the acquired ornaments, and the most fashionable rules of conversation; and a good man has something truly engaging in his deportment, that pleases more effectually than the possible civilities and seeming courtesy of the fine gentleman, and the ensnaring embraces and fair promises of the courtier.

The world may sometimes quarrel with their enemy, because he will not move a stone where the truth (Gal. iv. 16), and

flatterer, that distinguishes away guilt, and covers their vices with another name.

But they hate the former only whilst they are enemies to themselves, and employ the latter, just while he gives them a little ease, and lulls them into a deceitful security. But there is nothing more odious than flattery: and whilst it labours to conceal its baseness, it shews the excellence of truth, and confesses, that it is amiable in the eyes even of a prejudiced spectator; for it puts on the appearance of it, and studies to be unlike itself; for the mind, though vicious and depraved, cannot relish fulsome and disguised flattery, but rejects it with abhorrence. And the sinner looks down with contempt upon the despicable wretch that prostitutes his reason to the service of a lie, and renders himself the most vile and abject of creatures, to form a transitory interest, or purchase a forced and pretended approbation.

Such is the value of truth, that they that deviate from it must seem to adhere to it; and the most skilful flatterer tries to persuade the person he commends, that he has certainly those virtues, which he falsely ascribes to him: his commendation is as naught, unless it passes for truth, and his designs are disappointed, unless he is believed. How far preferable then is truth, which stands on a sure foundation, and does not court an uncertain opinion, a precarious esteem; which always pleases, when the mind Thas it is, and which prepares and by speake way to acceptance, even through shall, est prejudice.

First, Leads me, lastly, to derive the performance on the text, from the impartial Secondly, that wicked men make of their sober intervals, and when they are brought to themselves.

These sins having the assendant over them, are generally regarded in the first place; and every thing that offers itself is considered as agreeable to, or inconsistent with them. Their representation is received by the injured faculties of the mind, and it is compelled to assent to their unnatural interpretation: for we say they are they that ought to break, to break bonds over them. And whilst we are tied and bound in this miserable

slavery, the sight of a just and holy man provokes and inflames them; they are galled with his reproofs, and break out into opprobrious language.

Whilst they are warm in the pursuit of their supposed pleasures, they cannot bear the least interruption, they are too impatient to hearken to reason.

But there are some seasons in which they may be spoken withal: when their affections are cool, and they are wearied with the service of sin, they begin to consider the example that was set before them, the pathetic exhortations of the preacher of righteousness, the holy vehemence with which he applied himself to them, and the affectionate concern wherewith he intreated them. And they think with themselves: Surely he was in earnest; we indeed mocked at his persuasions, and made a jest of our calamity; but now we acknowledge that he spoke the truth, because he was thoroughly convinced of it, and expressed a compassion towards us, out of a sincere regard to us, and a just sense of our danger; we rejected him as our enemy, but we unreasonably accounted him so, since he deals with us no otherwise than with himself, and advises us to act as he believes we ought to do, according to his best judgment of things, and the rule of his own practice; why then should we violate our purest sentiments, by injuring the man who bears a good-will to us, and discharges the most difficult offices of friendship, by rescuing us out of our own hands, and telling us we are to our immortal souls?

These thoughts naturally ^{language} and by ^{and by an} them, when they are disposed ^{to be held from} der, and make a right estimate ^{of the} then they pay a deference ^{to God, that} holds fast the truth, and ^{ob-} ligations, much rather than ^{High} have conspired to degrade ^{themselves}: and unless they are totally blinded, they will at one time or other endeavour to make amends for their profane jests and raillery, by treating the better part of mankind with reverence, and despising those that run into the same excesses ^{er-} riot with them.

Having gone through the several ^{which} seculars proposed, I am persuaded ^{are to}

you have already drawn such inferences, as arise from them, and have prevented me in the application.

Let me only mention, the great example of righteousness, whom we this day commemorate, and the remarkable effect which his life and doctrine had upon Herod; and you will resolve to keep your integrity, and glory in a brave profession of religion; you will be animated and encouraged by the hopes of bringing piety into fashion, and putting a stop to the spreading contagion, and the vaunting confidence of sin.

* Consider with how swift a progress religion would prevail in the world, were not men ashamed of that which is their greatest glory, were they as bold and resolute in owning the practice of religion, as others are in propagating the corrupt notions and vicious manners of the age.

Consider the powerful influence of holiness, in that Herod feared John, for this very reason, because he was a just man and an holy; when at the same time he was able to banish him from his presence, and procure the quiet enjoyment of his sin. What a mighty efficacy ^{then} would holiness have, did those of the highest ranks and fortunes *let their light shine before men* (Mat. iii. 16.); it would be beautifully terrible to the combination of sinners, and chase away immorality and profaneness. Did they know the dignity of virtue, they would not so easily recede from it. They are carried away by the false maxims of honour, and yield to the clamours of a sinful generation; to gain their esteem, and acquire a vain applause.

Whereas the most likely way to be truly approved of men, is, first to be acceptable with God; and did they insist upon, and stedfastly preserve their virtue, the world would be at length brought over to them, and entertain the same sentiments of things.

They only betray themselves, by departing from the *old paths* (Jer. vi. 16.) of virtue, and discover a low contemptible spirit, by a mean compliance and a servile imitation.

And ^{him} ^{did the} ^{here} ^{to their} ^{profession,} ^{may} ^{a suitable} ^{practice,} ^{they} ^{tainly this} ^{will}

would be admired for their noble resolution, and their example would be esteemed as a law.

And how much more becoming is it to do their duty, and obtain that respect which is derived from the natural sense of good and evil, from the excellence of virtue; from the likeness it bears to the divine attributes; from the beautiful simplicity of truth and innocence, and from the impartial judgment of wicked men, when they are brought to themselves; than to be governed by humour and custom, by the perverse wills, and wild caprice of unreasonable men?

For these are more uncertain than their own vain breath, and their applause will perish sooner than a blast.

But virtue will recommend us to God's unerring approbation: and what he determines is fixed and certain, for it is done in truth and equity.

And all that have any regard to reason, will second his judgment, and the approbation of our conscience, and even they that behold the goodness afar off will admire it. And when the end of all things is come, our character will remain unimpaired; and God will do honour to us before an innumerable multitude; and there shall be no speech nor language but what shall speak our praise.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore.

SERMON CXXXII.

The Duty and Advantages of Sincerity.

PSALM XV. 2.

And speaketh the truth from his heart.

THE laws of God are imprinted upon the nature of man, and written in the tables of our hearts. But, alas! we soon deface the impression, and the glorious characters are quickly lost, because they are written but in dust. So great is their value, that they ought to be engraven upon marble with a pen of a diamond. But why do I speak of marble? for that also perishes, and the tables of stone were broken.

But the laws of God shall never fail; his fingers have committed them to a record that shall never be blotted out; and he will preserve them in everlasting characters in the book of life. There every line is a ray of glory, and every branch of our duty is a beam of that sun which shall never withdraw his light.

Till we can read it in that divine original, we cannot desire to behold a fairer copy of it, than appears in the Psalm which is now before us. Surely if ever the heart of the Psalmist indited a good matter, if ever his tongue was the pen of a ready writer, it was in this excellent portion of Scripture. In this he surpassed the rest of the children of men; *full of grace were his lips, and they dropped the dew of heaven.*

What wisdom may we learn from that important question: *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? or who shall rest upon thy holy hill?* And what satisfaction may we receive from that faithful answer which the spirit of God returned to him, or which, through his direction, he returned to himself: *Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.*

Every word that goes before the text, and every word that follows it, deserves our particular consideration; but let me at this time dwell upon the amiable virtue of truth and sincerity; or rather *let this be our rest for ever; here let us dwell, and have a delight therein.*

That you may ascend to the holy place by speaking the truth from your heart; I shall,

First, Endeavour to direct you in the performance of this duty, and

Secondly, To shew the advantages of it.

For That you may perform it aright, you should,

be cot, Consider the folly and baseness of of bitterness.

of your, You should cleanse your minds

The abrupt and vicious thoughts.

either of, You should possess them with sound, honourable principles. And;

you, You should speak from the grace of your hearts, without any intent, no of ensnaring or betraying your precious w.

And, 1st, You should consider the folly and baseness of insincerity.

Great is the folly of those men that leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness. Their exquisite subtilty serves as often to puzzle and perplex themselves, as to entangle others. They are lost in the intricate maze of deceit, and cannot find a way to escape out of the circle which they have artfully drawn. They make no progress by engaging in indirect courses, but are carried to and fro by their crooked and perverse dealings, like the winding stream, that turns back upon itself, and the swifter it runs, so much the sooner it comes again to its fountain.

The path of the just is as the shining light, to invite and lead them on to happiness; and they that have learnt the wisdom of integrity, are directed by the same heavenly guide, as *went before the children of Israel in a pillar of fire,* and conducted them safely through the mighty waters, and the barren wilderness. But they that follow their own treacherous policy, and plunge themselves into the depths of iniquity, are led astray by an uncertain guide, that resembles the wandering vapour of the night, which trains on the mistaken traveller, till he falls from a precipice, or sinks into the mire. They cannot fix upon a sure foundation, but are constrained to shift and change their place, *finding no rest for the sole of their foot.*

Their insincerity still wants a veil to cover it; for if it once appears, its sordid designs are defeated. But how hard is it to cover it effectually! Though the disguise be curiously wrought, it will soon be worn out, and require another pretence to conceal its failure: and even the endeavour to conceal it frequently betrays it, and the smoke shews that the flame is stifled.

There can be no peace in this unnatural state; fresh disquiets arise and rising in the mind; and while part of is treacherous, the temples of respect can take no rest. For they that are conscious to themselves that they are doing mischief, must also be apprehensive of the fatal discovery. Amidst the many cross ways of dishonesty, they know not which to choose, for in ever-

expect to meet an adversary. And indeed there are, as industrious to find them out, as they are to prevent it.

Such is the folly of insincerity, if we consider it with respect only to men; but how much greater is it, since there is an all-seeing God *with whom we have to do!* (Heb. iv. 13.) *His eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men, and considering the most secret parts: he knew all things ere ever they were created, so also after they were perfected he looked upon them all.* (Ecclus. xxiii. 29.)

He sees every spring and movement of the heart, and observes every passion that stirs within it, when it is soured with the rancour of settled hatred, preyed upon by the never-dying worm of inveterate malice, swelled and disturbed with envy, or inclined to blast our neighbour's reputation, by calumny and detraction.

No cloud or darkness can screen our thoughts from his view; they would all distinctly appear before him, *though they were more than the sea, and our counsels were profounder than the great deep.*

Though our heart were doubled and folded up with the most artful fraud, yet as a vesture he would unfold it.

He despises the admired contrivances of the consummate villain, and laughs him to scorn: *he frustrateth the designs of the liars, and maketh them mad; he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.* (Isai. xlv. 24.) And insincerity must be allowed to be no less base than foolish, the perfidious themselves being judges.

Every sin casts a blemish and dishonour upon our nature, and covers us with shame and confusion. But this is more especially shameful, and, as it proceeds from a mean abject spirit, so it writes fear and suspicion upon the face, and sets a mark on the sordid wretch that is guilty of it. He calls for the darkness to spread itself over him, studies to pass unobserved, and lurks in secret places: whilst no one but God and his own soul is privy to his design, he distrusts every step that he takes, and dreads every man that meets him, as if he would proclaim his disgrace.

Even the pretended advocates for honour, declare the baseness of lying and falsehood. For to give a man the lie, is

in their esteem an unpardonable affront; a reflection that can be washed out by nothing but blood; an offence that cannot be expiated by any thing, but the sacrifice and death of the offender.

And if the groundless imputation of lying is so foul a blot, how great is the weight of guilt and infamy that falls upon them who deserve the charge! and if they cannot bear to be accused of it without reason, should they not be afraid to give reason for the accusation?

If you consider the persons with whom you deal treacherously, you must necessarily be sensible of the vileness of your proceeding, and look upon the odious practice with loathing and abhorrence.

If they are honest and sincere, as probably they are; for they are the persons that are most easily wrought upon, the least suspicious of your baseness, and therefore the most exposed to it; think with yourselves, how unnatural it is, to make a prey of such ingenuous tempers, and privately injure them, while they innocently breathe forth their thoughts, and *pour out their hearts* before you.

Their sincerity bespeaks your tenderest regard, and you offer violence to yourselves, and put off your humanity, when you betray them. They, alas! entertain a kind opinion of you, and persuade themselves, they may safely put their confidence in you. And you (if you are false to them) stab them to the heart, while they are leaning upon your breasts, and knitting their soul with yours. If you can proceed to such villainy as this, you may also murder the guest that begs protection for a night under your roof, or you may imbrue your hands in the blood of the harmless infant in the midst of its peaceful sleep.

But supposing that the persons you are dealing with, are themselves insincere, and you flatter yourselves, that you are only acting the defensive part, and fighting with their own weapons, yet even then you are self-condemned. You are provoked by their treachery, and are you therefore treacherous? You justly abhor their practice, and yet imitate the practice you abhor.

The consequences of falsehood are most pernicious in the important affairs of life; it has also a baleful influence upon

our common conversation. It entirely destroys the cheerfulness of it, and strikes an uncomfortable damp upon it: there can be no pleasure in conversing together, if we are always afraid of being betrayed.

And we are exposed to dangers arising from tempers seemingly different. For one man appears free and open, and encourages us to speak in the same free and open manner. His design in the mean time is base, to take off the restraints of caution that keeps us in safety, and to draw us off from our guard, as the subtle commander advances and offers battle, that he may encourage his adversary to leave his places of strength and fight to to his disadvantage.

Another man lies on the reserve to watch for every slip and failing, and make a dishonest use of those indiscretions which he observes, and yet does not seem to observe, in others. Thus we fall into the hands of those that lie in wait for us, and are compassed about with enemies where none were expected.

Dreadful was that state of war which impious men have falsely supposed to be the state of nature; yet it were better for us to live in that dreadful state, always apprehensive of open violence, than to be always liable to be surprized by secret treachery.

Wretched is the condition of that people, whose *tongue is an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.* (Jer. ix. 8.)

That you may never incur this heinous charge, but may copy after him, in whose *lips there was found no guile*, you should, secondly, cleanse your minds from corrupt and vicious thoughts. For if the fountain be clean, the streams that flow from it will be pure from sin; but if this be corrupt, it will send forth the waters of bitterness, and taint the whole course of your actions.

The heart is the root and foundation either of good or evil; and if this be unsound, and has a canker lurking within it, you cannot safely rely upon it: and how fair soever your professions are, they are no more than an empty pretence, or a specious covering, that makes a show

for a time, and then, like blasted fruit, turns to decay.

As therefore we would deal sincerely with one another, you should carefully put away every unreasonable prejudice against your neighbour: for prejudice perverts the judgment, and misguides the will, and gives an evil tincture to all your thoughts, words, and actions.

Envy is another pernicious quality, that disposes men to perfidious dealing, and inclines them to lay trains and snares to injure the person that is the object of it.

And malice is always engaged in the strictest alliance with falsehood; and as they are the distinguishing characters of the accursed spirit, so they have the most prevailing influence over the vile wretched man that delights in the subtle arts of doing mischief.

And though they may seem less dangerous, yet you cannot too strictly guard against an arrogant opinion of your own wisdom, and a vain contempt of the simplicity of others. For these have prevailed with many to double and prevaricate, who yet were above the sordid temptations of avarice, and had no other motive to it, but only a fond opinion of their shrewd, dextrous conduct.

It is this that has moved them to practise upon the easy credulity of well-meaning men; to open their hearts by the false key of crafty insinuations, and to make the basest use of the confidence which is unwarily put in them. It is this that has filled them with an ill-natured pleasure, when they have taken the ignorant in the snares which they have curiously wrought, and made them insensible of the nets that are cast about them.

But amidst the many evil thoughts that corrupt the mind, you ought most especially to beware of those that tend to covetousness. For if this vice has gotten the dominion over you, it will tempt you not only to betray your brother, but to sell your soul.

It was this that influenced the accursed Judas, when he reproved Mary for anointing the feet of Jesus with very costly ointment, and pretended that it might be better employed, if it were sold, and the price of it given to the poor. This he

said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bore what was put therein. (John, xii. 5, 6.)

And it was this that had a hand upon him, when he betrayed him and his Saviour by a kiss, and delivered himself to perdition for thirty pieces of silver. (Mat. xxvi. 15.)

This, I hope, is sufficient to engage you to cleanse your minds from corrupt and vicious thoughts, and, in the third place, to possess them with just and honourable principles.

And one of the best principles that can be fixed and planted in you, is a sincere value for truth, and a due regard to your word.

Truth naturally recommends itself to the mind, and appears with an amiable beauty, though it has no other charms but its own simplicity. This virtue is most especially sweet to the soul, and demands your love and veneration with a mighty force and authority. And its authority should be held as sacred for ever; no corrupt breath should taint it, no faithless tongue should violate it. By its bands the members of society are held together; and every other tie must fall, and all relations be dissolved, if this be destroyed.

Without this there is no safety in commerce, no pleasure in conversation, no dependance upon friendship, no valuable alliance even in blood.

And if you have a just value for yourselves, you cannot but regard your word. And it is then highly worthy of the regard of others, when truth is stamped upon it.

The tongue is then a glorious member; and the faculty of speech is applied to the noblest use, when it faithfully conveys such a treasure.

The words of truth are like the purest metal bearing the royal image. And they are not questioned and received with suspicion and distrust, but pass with undoubted authority, and gain entire credit as soon as it is known what image and superscription they bear.

A generous scorn and abhorrence of falsehood is another principle almost as powerful as a just value for truth. For it has often happily restrained men from the

base practices of deceit, though they have fallen a prey to other temptations; and though many vices have taken possession of them, yet they have withheld themselves from perfidious dealing, because prudence and disdained it. And where prudence seems to have lost its power, generosity and honour have in some measure supplied its place, and forbid them to do a dishonest action.

And there is certainly a respect due to those in whom there are these remains of virtue; and though they ought to be blamed for being enemies to themselves, in committing other sinful actions, yet we should give them their deserved praise (and much they certainly deserve) for abstaining from *the sins of unfaithfulness*.

If you possess yourselves with benevolence and humility, these principles also will engage you to be strictly just. They will incline you to serve your brethren with cheerfulness, and promote their interest with fidelity.

While you preserve a tender concern for them, and are stedfastly resolved to perform every good office that lies in your power, no villainous thought can enter into your breast, no arts of deceit can gain access to you. For these proceed from malice and ill-nature, and cannot be entertained with pleasure by any one that does not delight in doing mischief.

But while you endeavour to make every man your friend, and to shew yourselves friends to every man, you cannot secretly violate their interest, or conceive a thought of being false and injurious to them, without indignation. Since the *mouth speaketh out of the abundance of the heart*, you should enrich it with virtuous principles, and furnish it with the treasures of goodness; and then you will,

Fourthly, speak from the ground of your hearts, without any intention of envenoming or betraying your neighbour: This alone can raise you to the character that is drawn by the Psalmist; if your words proceed from the depth of your heart, and are directed to a good end.

For this comprehends every thing that is valuable in speech; and without this, your words are either trifling, or heinously evil: for unless the heart guides you, they are slight and superficial, and no

more than the vain froth and overflowing of the lips; they are of no use or signification; and happy are they, if they were regarded as little by those that hear as by those that speak them.

But this is the least abuse of words, and not to be compared with the guilt of those that flow from a base and treacherous design.

In discharging the duty of sincerity, it is not necessary to speak the whole truth in every place, and lay open the entire state of your mind to every one that desires to look into it. We ought to keep a guard upon it, and communicate no more of it than is consistent with prudence and safety.

It is sufficient to open the first room in our hearts, to those with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted, and to let them in farther by degrees, as our intimacy and friendship are gradually improved.

When an insinuating spy is observing our conduct with an evil curiosity, we should take care to disappoint his traitorous intentions, and not rashly disclose our thoughts, as *Hezekiah shewed the house of his precious things, the silver, the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures, to the servants of the king of Babylon.* (Isai. xxxix. 2.) The safest and the justest way of acting, in such a case is to impart nothing but truth, and to conceal nothing with an insincere and villainous reserve.

But there are many cases in which we are required to speak the whole truth, and we should not keep back any part of it, or cover it with any disguise, or blend it with any corruption.

As it is pure in itself, and without any alloy, we should deliver it *with singleness of heart*, and imitate *the multitude of them that first believed in Christ, who were of one heart and one soul.* (Acts, iv. 32.)

When a positive promise is made, the nature of it should be fully considered: it gives the person to whom it is made, an absolute right to the thing that is promised: and to deny it him utterly, is a palpable injury; to withhold it longer than the time appointed, or put it off from day to day, is an unnatural cruelty,

and a barbarous abuse of the expectation which we have raised and encouraged.

Perhaps his ~~only~~ dependance rests upon it, and every disappointment tortures and afflicts him.

The heart is a joint-witness with God, and if it retracts or disowns the engagement, it contradicts the testimony of him who will prove and confirm it by infinite vengeance.

When we endeavour to recommend ourselves to each other by professions of kindness, we should really bear the kindness we profess: for unless this accompanies them, they are but as *clouds without water, and trees without fruit*. This is their best estate!

But if they are made not only without kindness, but with a wicked intention to ensnare the man that believes them, and accomplish his ruin, which cannot be so effectually brought to pass by open enmity, they are then *like to whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness*. (Matt xxiii. 27.). And they also in another respect resemble *the tombs* which were inhabited of old by *them that were possessed of devils*.

We cannot take too much care that our professions be sincere; for as they naturally rise to a higher degree; they will accordingly be attended by greater aggravations, if they proceed from a deceitful heart.

Then only may we trust ourselves, and be believed by others, when they are what they seem to be, and deserve the credit which we desire to obtain.

That you may *speak the truth from your heart*, I shall secondly shew the advantages of this duty, and it is no small advantage of it, that it gains us esteem, and gives force and authority to all our dealings.

Considering the mutual benefits that we enjoy, as members of society, we cannot but delight to pursue the means that convey those benefits to us. Nothing does more effectually convey them, than the trust and confidence which is put in us. Nothing confirms that trust and confidence more than a good reputation. And nothing more certainly gives us a good reputation than the experience of our honesty and integrity.

Even those that have too little to truth and sincerity in their own practice, are yet constrained to admit it in others, and are best satisfied in themselves, when they deal with a faithful man, and commit their most important concerns to a breast that will not betray them.

If we pass from the necessary affairs of life to the innocent pleasures of our ordinary conversation, even those pleasures derive all their sweetness from sincerity: when we are wearied with the business of the day, and are willing to refresh ourselves with the conversation of our friends and acquaintance; how agreeable and delightful is the refreshment, when there is no suspicion of falsehood, no danger of opening our minds too far, no fear of being taken in the snares of perfidious men!

Our happiness may then be compared to that of our first parents, when they walked forth in the garden of *Eden*, the air being pure and untainted, and the flowers breathing forth innocent odours.

Great also is the advantage of sincerity, in giving or receiving counsel or advice: and this is absolutely necessary to direct each other through the dangerous wilderness of this world: it fills us with comfort and *joy unspeakable*, to meet with a faithful friend, that leads us in the right way, or fairly tells us that we have departed from it.

When the mind is distracted with uncertain and perplexing thoughts, how seasonable and welcome are those admonitions which proceed from an honest heart, and a full purpose of promoting our welfare! They are as agreeable and refreshing as the *streams that flowed from the stony rock*. And while we enjoy them, our case is like that of *the woman of Samaria*, when she conversed with the *true Jesus*, who was able to *give her a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. (John, iv. 14.)

But how dreadful are the consequences of false and insincere advice! It leads us into straits and difficulties, that we may perish in them; as the thief and murderer directs the ignorant traveller into the narrow passages, that he may surprise and murder him there.

And when we are compelled to dwell in the tents of unfaithfulness, we are as miserable as those who are compassed about without penitence; when the very air they breathe spreads the infection, and the fountains, that should quench their thirst, inflame it.

But hoping better things of you, I shall farther endeavour to recommend sincerity, as it engages the good-will of mankind, and inclines them to favour and protect the man that holds fast his integrity. The influences of it are very extensive, and reach even to them that do not practise the virtue; it restrains their hands from violence, and forbids them to injure so sacred a character.

And the satisfaction that possesses our minds, the pleasure that rises within us, is a yet stronger inducement to this duty. Since we cannot but reflect upon our past conduct, it nearly concerns us so to live, that we may delight in our reflections. Every virtue does indeed conduce to it, but none more effectually than sincerity.

When we look into our breasts, how comfortable is it to find no accursed thing to trouble us, no base perfidious thought to rise in judgment against us, no dishonest action to upbraid us!

The pure and virtuous soul that is adorned with sincerity, appears like the beauty of holiness, or the tabernacle of God, when his glory rested upon it; or (if we may bring any thing into comparison with the innocent Jesus) we might compare it with the Lamb of God, in that glorious view, when the Holy Spirit was seen descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. (Matt. iii. 16.)

With what joy and triumph did the faithful Samuel appeal to the whole assembly of Israel, when he was old and grey-headed, and had walked before them from his childhood to that day.

And how fully was the purity of his conscience confirmed, by the united voice of the people: *Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, nor taken aught of any man's hand.* (1 Sam. xii. 4.)

Our rejoicing is this (says the great Apostle St. Paul), the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. (2 Cor. i. 12.)

What peace did he speak to himself with what courage did he speak to his flock! *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.* (2 Thess. ii. 10.)

So many are the advantages of sincerity in this world, that it is almost unnecessary to draw any arguments from the other. But if they are great, as it possesses the mind with peace, and brings down heaven to us, how much greater are they, as it raises us to heaven!

And this we are assured it will, for he that speaketh the truth from his heart, shall dwell in the tabernacle of God, and rest upon his holy hill.

In this present state we see each other but through a glass darkly, and can pass only uncertain judgments, and make but slight conjectures.

But in the other, we shall see God himself face to face, and be liable to no mistake, since we shall always behold the fountain of light. It was the particular happiness of St. John, to lean upon our Saviour's breast, at the last supper upon earth. But if we tread in his steps, we shall lie for ever in his bosom in heaven.

And he will perfectly reveal to us the delightful truths, which he spake with his mouth, and which fell from those lips, in which there was no guile.

We shall converse with the spotless souls, which were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and unto the Lamb. (Rev. xiv. 4.) We shall enjoy the friendship of angels and arch-angels, who delight to proclaim their good-will to men.

And the heavens shall open to receive us into the company of the blessed Nathaniel, and all other true Israelites in whom there was no guile. (John, i. 47.)

Having endeavoured to direct you in the practice of sincerity, and shewn the advantages of it, let me leave the whole upon your thoughts in the words of St. Paul.

Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if

there be any praise, think of these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. (Phil. 9.)

S E R M O N CXXXIII.

The Promise of the Comforter considered.

[Preached at Magdalen College, in Oxford, on Whitsunday.]

JOHN, xiv. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

WHEN our Saviour's departure was nigh at hand, he began to prepare the minds of his disciples for their approaching trial, and to alleviate their affliction, at the seeming loss of their best friend, with promises of comfort and support, equal to the sharpest conflicts.

Having assured them that he would grant whatsoever they should ask in his name, for their own real advantage and the propagation of his gospel; and having done enough to deserve the most ardent love, and engage all their affections, he requires one distinguishing proof of their sincerity: *If ye love me, keep my commandments. (John, xiv. 15.)*

To reward their endeavours, and to enable them to perform yet more and more, he adds, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

It was expedient for them that he himself should go away; for if I go not away, says he, the Comforter will not come unto you. (John, xvi. 7.) According to the order of God's dispensations, it was requisite that he should first ascend into the heavens, and then the third person in the blessed trinity should come down to make a lasting abode with them. And our Saviour speaks as if the Holy Ghost would not only supply his place, but render his presence of most advantage to them.

He knew the frailty of their nature, the concern they must lie under, when they were scattered abroad, as sheep

without a shepherd, and the great work he had designed them for, and the difficulties they must encounter in charge of it; and therefore he promises to apply himself to his Father, and probably to the office he had undertaken, and to pray for them, that he would send down his Holy Spirit, who was qualified to succeed the Messiah in his ministry here on earth, as he was equally God-blessed for ever, and who would perfect the work, which, in his infinite wisdom, he was pleased to leave unfinished; for he tells them, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit, when the Spirit of truth shall come, he will guide you into all truth. (John, xvi. 12, 13.)* And to render his presence more than an equivalent for that of their Saviour in the flesh, he was to abide with them for ever.

The word which is rendered comforter, signifies also an advocate and exhorter, in all which capacities the Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles, and in them to all the world. In considering the extent of this promise, I shall have a regard to each of these senses.

First, As he was an advocate, an exhorter, and a comforter to the Apostles.

Secondly, To the Christians of all ages; which will bring me,

Thirdly, To shew in what respects he was to abide with them for ever. And,

First, He was an advocate, an exhorter, and a comforter to the Apostles. The Christian religion, though fully ratified by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, did not recommend itself to the world till the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were shed on the preachers of it. And considering the prejudices of mankind, which are hardly to be pierced through by the brightest evidence; considering the sacred authority of the Jewish religion, the pretended antiquity of the heathenish superstitions, the prevailing power of sin, and the established dominion of Satan, it could not be expected, that the gospel should be easily received, which required an utter enmity with sin; which discovered the folly of the heathen sages, and the gross errors of their idolatry; and which boasted of more perfection than the law of Moses.

And had there been none of these objections against it, had the gospel itself been agreeable to the blind zeal, the vain opinions, and the supposed interest of men; yet the persons chosen to publish it, had been thought to cast a slur upon it; and a few illiterate fishermen could not have gained an entrance into the palaces of princes, and a favourable hearing from the pride of courts; they could not have persuaded the masters of Israel to learn instruction, or wrought the admired oracles of the Gentiles, into an opinion, that even they could teach them wisdom.

But when the truth itself was unacceptable, and the persons appointed to preach it could only lessen it in the eyes of a vain-glorious world; nothing but the divine assistance could sufficiently recommend them; nothing but the working of God on the minds of men could reconcile them to the way which was every where spoken against. (Acts, xxviii. 22.)

As it was unlikely that the Apostles should succeed in their endeavours, barely by their natural strength and weak capacities; so they would scarcely have attempted any thing when it was a work of toil and danger, and appeared very difficult, if not impossible, to perform.

We must suppose them subject to the same passions with other men, to have the same tender apprehensions of evils; and, as they could not rush upon them without fear, so they were not ignorant of the consequences of speaking in the name of Jesus. For their Lord and Master had given them a dreadful warning, and a lively representation of that scorn, malice, and cruelty, which they should firmly expect, and certainly undergo.

And their sense of these calamities must be heightened, by the pleasing mistake, that they had long entertained, in common with the rest of the Jews, that they should enjoy the greatest happiness in the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. Their condition, therefore, required, that the *spirit of God should rest upon them*. (Isa. xi. 2.); and, in compassion to their infirmities, and for the general good of mankind, his sacred fire descended to purify and enlighten their minds, to kindle nobler thoughts, and better conceptions of things.

And such were its effects, that they were not ashamed to maintain the cause of the crucified Jesus, and glory in being the disciples of a supposed malefactor. Animated by a divine principle, and filled with spiritual life, they despised tortures and death, and the impotent contempt and scornful boasting of the professors of worldly wisdom. Being assured that they had a faithful advocate to plead for them, they neglected the usual preparations, and ordinary methods of defence, and yet durst to engage with the chief of their adversaries, that were trained up in the arts of fallacious reasoning, and qualified to ensnare the innocent. They depended on God's assistance in the needful time, in the article of danger; for their Saviour engaged himself to support them. *When they bring you unto the synagogues and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.* (Luke, xii. 11, 12.) Thus they went into the midst of great multitudes; and though there were numbers to overpower, and clamour to silence, though there was wit to deride, artifices to baffle, and threatenings to discourage them, yet they spoke the truth of God, answered the objections, rejected the scollings, and wiped off the calumnies of their accusers.

And as this their advocate enabled them to speak in the behalf of a persecuted religion, and endured them with such measures of strength, that though *the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing; though the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ, yet they broke their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords from them.* (Psal. ii. 1, 2, 3.); so he turned the hearts of men in favour of them, and *made their enemies be at peace with them.* (Prov. xvi. 7.) By his secret operations, he changed the bent and disposition, even of the perverse and stubborn Jew, reconciled the teachers of philosophy to the doctrines of the cross, which they once called *foolishness* (1 Cor. i. 23.) and gained many proselytes to a pure and

holy religion, in the courts of heathen emperors, and out of the nearest kindred of cruel and unrelenting tyrants.

Even they that *denied the holy One, and killed the Prince of Life* (Acts, iii. 14, 15.), were of the multitude of them that were afterwards joined to the disciples.

Whilst the chief priests and elders took counsel to slay them, Gamaliel, a Pharisee, a doctor of law, that was had in reputation among the people (Acts, v. 34), allayed the fury that was kindled against them, by persuading his brethren, to beware, lest they should fight against God. (Ver. 39.)

The keeper of the prison came and fell down before Paul and Silas his prisoners, and washed their stripes (Acts, xvi. 29, 33.), which perhaps he himself had given them.

And the ministers of torture were softened into pity, at the point of execution, and would become partakers of their sufferings, rather than inflict them on the disciples of Jesus.

Through the same blessed Spirit, the successors of the Apostles were first admitted into the presence of the emperors, and then offered such apologies to them as suspended the hottest persecutions, and almost prevailed with them to repeal the edicts published against the Christians.

Such was the force and mighty influence of these apologies, that they subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, and took away the edge of the sword. (Heb. xi. 33, 34.)

A second office of the Holy Spirit, was to stand by the Apostles, and exhort them to pass cheerfully through this vale of sorrow, and go on in the discharge of their duty, when the terrors of a thousand deaths were set in array against them. Such is the frailty of our nature, that it seemed to want a support, even when Almighty God had taken it upon him.

He that could have commanded legions of angels (Mat. xxvi. 53.) to fight for him, was pleased to permit one of that glorious order to attend him, in his agonies in the garden; and to shew, that as man, he was moved at the sight of that

bitter cup (Luke, xxii. 43.) which was mixt for him, there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him (Mat. xxvi. 56). And the disciples, that forsook him and fled, were infinitely more liable to fail, were in a more pressing want of such aids as would be sufficient for them.

And their Master poured out his grace in great abundance upon them, and considered the difficulties attending their high calling. And as often as they were required to appear on an extraordinary occasion, they were sensible of the immediate presence, and received the dictates of the Holy Ghost.

They were released out of prison, that they might preach before those that had cast them into it, and by a message from Heaven, were commissioned to go, stand, and speak in the temple, to the people, all the words of this life. (Acts, v. 20.)

When the question was put to them, Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name (ver. 28.)? they answered, pursuant to the divine command, We ought to obey God rather than men. (ver. 29.) He presented unto them opportunities of publishing the gospel, and exhorted them to offer the means of salvation to such as would accept of them.

Thus when an eunuch of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, was returning from Jerusalem, sitting in his chariot, and reading Isaia's prophet, the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot (Acts, viii. 27, 28, 29.); and such was the success of his preaching, that the eunuch declared, that he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. (Acts, viii. 37.)

Thus also in the case of Cornelius the Centurion (Acts, x.), by the direction of the Spirit, several circumstances concurred to prepare him for his conversion, and to dispose St. Peter to bring the glad tidings of salvation to him and his household. The Gentiles were inclined to seek him, and he was persuaded to comply with their request.

When St. Paul, by the guidance of the Spirit, departed to Corinth, the Lord spake unto him by night in a vision: Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not

thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. (Acts, xviii. 9, 10.)

And when he had borne his name among the Gentiles, he tells his followers, *I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.* (Acts, xx. 22, 23, 24.) It was the Spirit that gave him this view of his sufferings, and enabled to stand stedfast and unmoveable; which brings me to consider him,

Thirdly, as a comforter; and in this respect the disciples impatiently expected him, in their private character, as they were touched with the same sorrows as other men are at the departure of their friend.

It was a severe trial to see their great deliverer, in whom they trusted, with whom they went up and down, and familiarly conversed, *nailed to a cross, and numbered with the transgressors.* (Isa. liii. 12.) They could not willingly let go their hopes; and their hearts must sink within them, when they were forced to bury them in the grave with their Saviour. And though his resurrection raised up their drooping souls, yet his short continuance on earth, would rather have enhanced than alleviated their affliction, had they been left comfortless for ever, and abandoned and exposed to the cruel mockeries of an insulting world.

But he would not leave them comfortless, but promised to give *such peace as the world could not give.* (John, xiv. 27.) and to fill them with unspeakable consolation.

And for this they were waiting with one accord, in prayer and supplication, when on a sudden they were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts, i. 14.—ii. 4.); and his comforts not only wiped away all tears from their eyes (Rev. vii. 17.), and drew a veil over their past sorrows, but maintained a cheerful composed temper, and

a fixed resolution, amidst the sharpest pangs and most exquisite tortures. When they were beaten for glorying in the name of Jesus, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. (Acts, v. 41.) Nay, though the prison doors were opened, they refused to accept of their liberty, and they that imprisoned them, came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. (Acts, xvi. 39.)

These spiritual comforts placed them above the power of their enemies, defeated their cruelty, and upbraided them with weakness. Had they privily escaped, or been rescued by violence, they that hated them had not known the measure of their own power, and therefore had supposed it greater than it was; they had flattered themselves with a vain imagination, and been swoln with the thought of what they intended. But since they put it in execution, stretched out their power to its utmost length, and did the worst that ingenious malice and artful cruelty could invent; and yet all this was too little to deprive them of their peace and satisfaction; since they saw them smiling upon the face of death, enjoying their punishment, and breathing out their souls in praise and thanksgiving; this must mortify their pride, and be an ungrateful disappointment to them.

And all this was owing to that blessed Spirit that was their advocate to plead for them, their monitor to exhort them, and their faithful friend to comfort them.

These kind offices he performed in behalf of the Apostles: and though their case was extraordinary, yet the same gracious Spirit considers our common necessities; for,

Secondly, The benefits of his intercession, his exhortations, and his comforts, are promised to the Christians of all ages. And,

1st, He is our advocate; as he teaches us to pray, and then makes our requests known to God: we are foolish and ignorant before him, and though we are hardly sensible of any thing in ourselves, but wants and necessities, yet we cannot represent our condition, or offer up such

petitions as become wretched indigent creatures.

We understand so little of the things that are before us, that it is dangerous to trust our own desires, and we should be far more miserable than we are, were we not under the care of a wise and good Being, that distinguishes between what is really fit for us, and what we importunately crave, that with-holds the curses we imprudently call down upon ourselves, and blesses us with frequent denials.

What an unspeakable advantage is this, that God directs our applications to him, before he receives them! Infinite condescension! He frames our prayers, that he may accept of them, and teaches us to ask for such things as he can vouchsafe to grant, and such as are best for us to receive.

These are stupendous instances of mercy, that the first person in the trinity should hearken to us, sinful creatures; that the second should present our petitions at the throne of grace, with the intercession of his own perfect obedience, and intreat for the acceptance of them, as a reward of his sufferings; and that the third should join with our spirit, second and enforce our desires, *with groanings which cannot be uttered* (Rom. viii. 26.), put himself in our place, and beg for our relief, more earnestly, more importunately, than the wretch that is ready to perish does for an alms.

Edly, To qualify us for the blessings of heaven, he exhorts us to do our duty. He abides with us for ever, if we do not constrain him to give us up to our folly. And he continually follows us with persuasives to a good life. Every religious thought, every honest intention proceeds from him; he waits for a proper season of speaking to us, meets us *in the openings of the gates* (Prov. i. 21.), and at every turning; lays such trains of occurrences, as are most likely to allure us to do our duty, recommends the happy opportunity of saving our souls, and endeavours to prepare our minds, that we may act in the fortunate juncture, in such a manner as will be for our lasting advantage. How often does he whisper to us, *This do and live* (Gen. xlii. 18.); with what care does

he sow the seed of God's word in our hearts!

How constantly does he water the tender plant! How does he labour to season our minds with virtue! Do not we often find ourselves struck with some affecting truth? and are we not pleased to see the impression? When we are inflamed with a pious sermon, or a beautiful description of religion, a lively representation of the rewards of righteousness, or the torments of the damned; it is the Holy Spirit that speaks to us by his ministers, that gives the truths of religion their full force and efficacy, that beseeches us to be happy, and with an affectionate concern, persuades us to avoid the way that leads to misery.

And, 3dly, That we may not want any thing that is requisite to bring us to the everlasting enjoyment of himself, he supports us with his comforts; and these he abundantly supplies us with in the time of trial, and after we have strove to gain the conquest. Agreeably to the condition we were designed for here below, he permits us to fall into temptations. But to prevent our yielding to them, he is always ready to help us, and then most especially reaches out himself to us when our case most requires; and if men do not presume too far, or leave their whole business to him, without the least concurrence on their part; he will certainly either remove the temptation, or render their virtue more glorious in triumphing over it. Hence it is that they sometimes maintain their ground against the most violent opposition, and perceive that they are endowed with greater strength, than they were ever conscious of before. As the evils of this world come fast upon them, *like a wide breaking in of waters* (Job, xxx. 14), their resolutions are more and more confirmed; and their almighty Comforter bids them stand up undaunted, in the midst of those sufferings, at the expectation of which nature trembled, and the succours of reason were ready to forsake them, and fly away. Hence it is that they have preserved their innocence, though almost every thing else that was dear to them, came in competition with it, and have received the most astonishing tidings of ill fortune, with an easy

indifference, a generous contempt, and a noble bravery.

And, after the temptation has attacked them in vain, and they look back with pleasure on the conflict, then it is, that *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, fills their hearts and minds.* (Phil. iv. 7.) Under his shadow they enjoy a delightful calm; their conscience gives its unerring approbation, and the Spirit witnesses with it; and, from their joint testimony, they derive a firm assurance of inheriting an eternity of bliss. And that we may not think this an ill grounded persuasion, and that the Apostles only had reason to expect such a Comforter, I am,

Thirdly, To shew in what respects, he was to abide with them for ever. The persons to whom this promise was made, are to be considered in three capacities: as the disciples of our Lord; as the pastors of his church, and as the representatives of all believers, in the succeeding ages of Christianity.

As they were the disciples of Jesus, he was to abide with them, during their life; which short and uncertain space is here termed for ever; and this, in opposition to the small number of years in which their Saviour had continued with them. He did not manifest himself to them, till he thought it expedient to enter on the public discharge of his ministry, and after he had performed his mighty works amongst them, he was cut off for the transgressions of his people; and though he again appeared to them, it was only to stay forty days, to display the glory of his resurrection, to promise them *another Comforter, that should abide with them for ever*; and then, in the presence of them all, to ascend triumphantly into heaven, that he might give this best of gifts unto men.

That they might not sorrow as men without hope, or be deprived of the enjoyment of this heavenly guest, by fearing the loss of so great a blessing, he was to make himself their constant companion, and to *preserve their going out and their coming in, from that time forth for evermore.* (Psal. cxxi. 8.)

As they were pastors of Christ's flock, all that should succeed them in that sacred office, were with them entitled to the

benefits of this last promise of their Saviour. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were indeed peculiar to the first ages of Christianity, and continued no longer than they were necessary for the propagation of the faith; but his assistance was promised to all that were set apart to minister in holy things: their authority is ratified by him: he seconded their endeavours, and gives success to their preaching; and by this gracious influence, our Saviour is still present with us, and if we watch over the people committed to our charge, *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us, to, he is with us always even to the end of the world.* (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

But there is an infinite treasure of graces and blessings, which are not confined to any age, or to any order of men; and these were promised to the Apostles, as they represented the whole body of Christians. Every one that asks of God in the name of our only Mediator, shall certainly receive the graces of his Spirit. Sincere and fervent prayer is the only condition of obtaining them; and though we are of ourselves weak, helpless creatures, yet if we come rightly qualified to implore the divine favour, we may engage omnipotence in our defence, and as far as our condition requires, God's power will become our own. To encourage our dependance upon him, he has adopted us for his sons; and from the natural affection which parents bear towards their offspring, he teaches us to conclude, that he will do much more for us than the most tender father will do for his children: *If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (Luke, xi. 13.) *We may therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, for we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb. iv. 16.)

And though we live at a distance from the time of our Saviour's appearing in the flesh, yet we have *another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that will abide with us for ever.*

But let us remember the conditions that will qualify us for his presence; and prepare a place for him in our hearts: let

us cleanse our thoughts, and keep our intentions pure and unspotted, that our prayers may be such as he will approve, such as he will condescend to make known to the Father, and enforce with his powerful intercessions.

Let us hearken to his kind exhortations, and consider, how inexcusable, how ungrateful, how unnatural it is, to disobey his repeated admonitions, when it is for our sakes he speaks to us when it can be no addition to his own happiness, when the motives he uses to prevail upon us, are the strongest obligations to the practice of virtue, or dissuasives from vice, eternal happiness, or endless misery.

Let us endeavour to answer his important designs in coming down to abide with us. Let us *not grieve his Holy Spirit* (Eph. iv. 30.) who endears himself to us by the name of Comforter, and who is pleased to represent himself as rejoicing with our conscience, and glorying in our conquest over sin.

Let us not hate this to aggravate our torments; that we refused to be intreated by God himself, when he vouchsafed to be our companion, our familiar friend, that he might save us.

Let us not chuse the society of accursed spirits, when the Holy Ghost has wooed and besought us to receive him, and offered to abide with us here on earth, that we might abide with him for ever in heaven. Amen.

S E R M O CXXXIV.

By THOMAS NEWLIN, M.A.

The Necessity of shewing our Faith by our Works.

JAMES, ii. 19.

Thou believest that there is one God: Thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble.

THE proofs of the being of a God strike with so bright an evidence upon the minds of men, that they are constrained to believe, and cannot deny their assent to this great important truth. But the corruption of nature prevails so far; and their affections cleave so fast to their vices, that they endeavour to persuade

themselves that the bare belief of a God is sufficient for them; and desire to rest in the profession, without the practice of religion.

And could they obtain this favourable indulgence, we should hear no more complaints of the difficulty of believing; the atheist would give up his admired cavils, and darling objections, and would be contented to renounce his infidelity, if he might still continue in immorality.

The ancient heretics laboured to procure this state of licentiousness, and flattered themselves into an opinion, that they might believe in God, and serve their sins, like the strange nations that were planted in *Samaria, who feared the Lord, and served their own gods.* (2 Kings, xvii. 33.)

The works of the ceremonial law, having been justly proved to be no longer necessary, they argued from thence against the necessity of the moral law. And they concluded that faith alone was so excellent, or even so meritorious, that they might lay their whole stress upon it, and needed no other title to eternal happiness.

To prevent the fatal effects of this erroneous notion, the apostle St. James speaks against it with a becoming warmth, and earnestness of expression, and the utmost force of argument. He shews that *faith without works is dead*; (James, ii. 17.) entirely unprofitable, and ineffectual to salvation; and very far prefers the man that *shews his faith by his works*, before him, *who shews his faith without works*. (James, ii. 18.) And at length applying himself to the latter, he offers a dreadful, but certain and weighty truth to his consideration: *Thou believest that there is one God: Thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble.* He commends him for believing; but tells him, the devils also do the same. And if it cannot avail for the abatement of the torments of hell, it can never avail for the attainment of the happiness of heaven.

That this powerful argument may make a due impression upon us, I shall shew,

First, That the bare belief of a God is ineffectual to salvation. And,

Secondly, That it will serve only to aggravate our guilt, and sharpen our punishment. And,

First, it is ineffectual to salvation, because it is not properly a virtue. It rests in the mind without exerting itself, and lies dormant there, without inclining the will to obey, or bringing the affections into subjection to God. And we may illustrate its weakness and insufficiency, by an obvious and familiar instance. Should a subject acknowledge his sovereign to have a lawful and undoubted right to his crown, and declare it to be his constant opinion, and yet withhold his obedience from him, and refuse to make the due returns for protection; we should certainly think his demands unreasonable if he claimed a place of profit or honour, as a just reward of this vain acknowledgment and empty declaration. And we should think him yet more unreasonable, if he not only neglected his service, but engaged in rebellion against him; and yet expected that the owning of his title should be esteemed an undeniable plea for pardon.

And if the slight acknowledgment of an earthly sovereign falls short of our duty to him, how much shorter must as slight an acknowledgment fall of our duty to the King of Heaven!

And St. James has fully illustrated the case, in the instance of charity. Though we make the most specious pretensions to that glorious virtue, yet unless we bring forth fruits worthy of it, it is less than nothing, and vanity. *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and we say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and notwithstanding this, give them not those things that are needful to the body; what doth it profit?* (James, ii. 15, 16.) It is not charity, but an insolent sarcasm, that vexes the soul of the needy, and breaks them in pieces with words. (Job, xix. 2.)

How fatally was the church of Laodicea deceived, when she said she was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, though she was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! (Rev. iii. 17.) Thus are they deceived, who satisfy themselves with believing, that there is an infinitely wise, and just, and holy God,

while they offend his wisdom, justice, and holiness.

Moreover, the barren belief of a God is not properly a virtue, because we are almost compelled to believe there is a God. To assent to a well-attested truth, is not a matter of choice, but rather a necessary operation of the mind. For truth is its natural object; and when it presents itself, supported by authentic testimony, the mind as readily receives it, as the eye does the light when it springs forth from its fountain.

We may indeed confine ourselves to a place of darkness, or shut our eyes that the light may not shine in upon them; and we may be so perverse, as to argue, that there is no such thing as light, that it is only a pleasing vision, and exists only in our imagination. But at the same time, we cannot but know, that we obstinately confine ourselves, and suffer violence and torture, that we may not behold the light.

And the same perverseness may tempt us to reject all the proofs of the being of God, and guard every passage to our minds, that no argument may enter into them. And whilst we suspend our reason, and disdain to hearken to the reports even of our senses, we may insolently affirm, that there is no God, and attempt to laugh away the belief of him, as the invention of priestcraft, or the imposition of arbitrary power. But still we unavoidably know that we offer an unnatural violence to ourselves, and can hardly withstand the proofs that surround us, though we scornfully cast them off, with the most inveterate prejudice.

We live in the midst of them; they cry unto us, whithersoever we go, and continually put forth their voice: they appear in the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths: they wait for us at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors (Prov. viii. 1, 2, 3.): they offer themselves to each of our senses, and meet us in every thought. (Wisd. vi. 16.)

If we consider the heavens, and the beautiful order of the moon, and the stars, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. (Psal. xix. 1.)

If we could go down to hell, and view the prisoners that are held in everlasting chains, the very devils would tell us, there is a God: we should find no atheists there: for those accursed spirits believe and tremble.

If we behold the dawning of the day, it will proclaim his being to us, for the *outgoings of the morning praise him.* (Psal. lxx. 8.) And when the darkness spreads itself over us, our own hearts assure us, that *he maketh darkness, and it is night.* (Psal. civ. 20.)

If we think upon the wonders of the great deep, they constrain us to acknowledge him, who *lifteth up the waves thereof, and who maketh the storm a calm.* (Psal. cvii. 25, 29.)

The time would fail me to speak of the cattle upon a thousand hills, (Psal. l. 10.) the armies of creatures that move upon the face of the earth, the swarms of insects, and the seeds of plants, each of which infinitely exceeds all the works of art, and sufficiently proves the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God.

But were there no other creature than man, he would himself display a world of wonders, and effectually confute his own arguments, whilst he attempted to disown his Maker.

His eye contains almost as many beauties as it beholds: and the man that curiously examines its artful frame, may be tempted to dwell for ever upon it, and say, as the surprised disciple did, *It is good for me to be here.* (Luke, ix. 33.)

The tongue that too often blasphemes the name of God, does yet, in spite of the sinner, proclaim his glory: and those very talents that are abused to the denial of a God, do undeniably shew that there is one.

How much soever the pretended infidel may endeavour to deface his reason, yet it still will bear the image and superscription of God. And though degenerate man may sink himself into the depth of corruption, and become little more than dust and ashes, yet some sparks of the heavenly fire will remain within him, some tokens of the Deity will be left, in the ruins of human nature.

And the proofs of his being, which we find within and without us, which attend us, *when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up* (Deut. vi. 7.), are abundantly confirmed by the united testimony on every age and nation.

Ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth (Deut. iv. 32.), and they will tell you, there has been no part of time without the knowledge of God. *And ask from the one side of heaven to the other* (Deut. iv. 32.), and it will tell you, there has not been any nation or people intirely ignorant of him.

A faint and glimmering light discovered itself in the lands of darkness; and though the wretched inhabitants had almost forgotten that they were men, yet they had not utterly forgotten that there was a God.

And the wisest of the nations preserved the knowledge of his being, and valued it more than all the improvements of their reason. They were not so *wise in their own conceits* (Rom. xii. 16.), as our modern infidels, nor did they reject it, as a thing above their capacities, nor scoff at it, as a thing below them.

When the several countries were peopled, the knowledge of God spread itself over the world; and after the division of tongues, every speech and language ministered to the propagation of it.

And I may appeal even to the atheist himself concerning the proofs of a Deity, as St. Paul did to Agrippa, concerning the prophets, *Believest thou these things? I know that thou believest.* (Acts, xxvi. 27.)

For though all other arguments should in vain demand his belief, though they press him in vain to hearken to them, yet his fears are still an unanswerable argument, and must and will be heard. They cry so loud, that they can never be silenced; they are so firmly rooted in his being, that they can never be removed.

His haughtiest laughter and derision, is but a fallacious shew to cover them; and his boasted objections are no more. While

he endeavours to shake the faith of others, he cannot satisfy himself, but distrusts his own foundation, while he attempts to destroy the rock of ages.

If we follow him into his retirement, his fears are there; if we attend him into company, they are there also. Whilst he admires the wine, when it giveth his colour in the cup, and moveth itself aright (Prov. xxiii. 31), a guilty terror seizes him, that biteth like a serpent, and stings like an adder. (Ver. 32.)

When he buoys up his spirits with forced and artificial mirth, his countenance is suddenly changed, and his thoughts trouble him. (Dan. v. 6.)

And when he is compelled to be alone, he is an odious companion to himself, and is self-condemned, though he will not own the conviction.

If we behold the pomp of a triumph, and see the greatest of infidels swelling with the spoils of conquest, and drawing princes and nobles in chains after him, could we enter into the secrets of his heart, we should find dread and confusion there. There would need no slave to ride in the triumphant chariot, no miserable wretch to rebuke his pride. He is himself the slave, though he appears to be the happiest of men.

And while he almost imagines that he is a God, though he denies that there is one; his fears smite him, as the angel of the Lord smote the blasphemous Herod (Acts, xii. 23.); and his accursed soul speaks these bitter things against him? *hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming.* (Isai. xiv. 9.)

And the fears of men are just, since the very devils believe and tremble. When the Son of God appeared in the form of a servant, and the fashion of a man, with the infirmities of our flesh, and the wants of our nature, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, legions of evil spirits acknowledged him in that humble state, and were struck with dread and amazement at the sight of him.

In the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know

thee, who thou art, the holy one of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this? For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. (Luke, iv. 33, 34, 35, 36.)

And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was the Christ. (Luke, iv. 41.)

The last words of the expiring oracles which were actuated by devils, gave testimony to him; and when they were utterly silenced, their silence gave a more effectual testimony.

And those miserable spirits that are confined in the prisons of the damned, do undoubtedly believe that there is a God of infinite power, whose wrath will manifest itself in a devouring fire, and everlasting burnings. They already feel the rod of his anger living in continual misery, and expecting a continual increase of torment.

And knowing the certainty of it, they shew their unrelenting hatred to men, by tempting them to the highest degrees of sin against God, and endeavouring to aggravate their guilt and their punishment.

They behold with a malicious pleasure the success of their execrable designs; and having sown the tares, they delight (if we may call it delight) in observing the mighty growth, and seeing our vices increase and multiply.

And this is the spring of all their endeavours, that they know there is certainly a God, whom they fear with the greatest terror, whom they hate with a perfect hatred, who is able to punish his enemies for ever and ever.

And indeed did not the profane themselves believe there was a God, their impious scoffing, and blasphemous wit, would lose its sting and sharpness. It would not please, were it not surprizing, and it would not surprize, if it were not terrible; and they could not think there was a God.

Were the notion of his being really contemptible, they could not assume so much to themselves for despising it: their extraordinary courage, and fancied greatness of soul, would shrink to nothing, did it consist only in ridiculing a thing of nought.

But to believe there is a God of infinite majesty, wonderful in his doings, and terrible in his judgments; and yet to revile him with a daring confidence, and render him the subject of their ludicrous mirth, and wanton raillery; to despise the multitude of the nations for adoring him, and expose the weakness and cowardice of a religious fear, and an holy reverence; this is the heroic bravery, the admired master-piece of this improved age.

Where then is the virtue of believing, if we only believe? The impious, the profane, the devils, and (I may also say) the atheists (whatsoever they pretend) do the same. We know that it is hardly possible to disbelieve that there is a God; what then can we claim for believing that there is one? When *every thing in the heavens, in the earth, and under the earth*, is a proof of his being, to doubt of it, is no less foolish than impious. For to doubt without reason, is as palpable a token of folly, as to believe without reason. And a groundless suspicion, though it may sometimes pass for wisdom, is a manifest sign of weakness. Because it is dangerous to build upon the sand, is it therefore dangerous to build upon a rock?

If we question the being of a God, we may as justly question whether we were born, because we know not all the circumstances of our birth, or cannot exactly tell how we grew in the womb.

Or we may as justly affirm, that we shall never die, *though thousands fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand* (Psal. xci. 7.) because we are ignorant of the manner of our dissolution, and cannot fully describe the divorce of the soul from the body.

This then is undoubtedly certain, that the existence of a God is so clearly attested, that we cannot but believe it, unless we renounce our reason.

But if we believe it just as we believe the histories of ancient times, or the de-

scriptions of distant countries; if we think it concerns us no more than the ages that we can never recall, or the nations that we shall never behold; it would have been better for us, if we had never heard of the name of God, or were really atheists in opinion, as well as practice. For,

Secondly, It will serve only to aggravate our guilt, and sharpen our punishment. It is as necessary to *confess with our mouth*, as to *believe in our heart* (Rom. x. 9.), that there is a God. But this necessary profession of our religion will certainly condemn us, unless it is confirmed and enlivened by our practice. For it adds hypocrisy to sin; and the more we boast of our faith, so much the louder our sins will cry against us.

The speculative atheist (if there is any such person) hopes that there is no God, because he has affronted him. But the sinful believer continues to affront him, though he knows that there is one. The former will not acknowledge him to be his Lord; but the latter calls him Lord, and then denies him. The former acts without principles; the latter acts against them. And whilst one denies God's being, the other tramples upon his perfections.

We may behold a resemblance of the atheist in the obstinate Jews, when they spoke the words of ignorance and contempt; *As for this fellow we know not from whence he is.* (John, ix. 29.)

And we behold a lively resemblance of the sinful believer in *the soldiers of the governor*, that *bowed the knee before Jesus*, and then *spit upon him, and smote him on the head.* (Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.) Though he pretends to receive him as his king, yet he pays his homage, by giving him a crown of thorns, and his specious declarations are no more than a solemn mockery.

If we lay his words and actions in the balance together, and allow them to be of equal weight, yet even upon this favourable allowance, his religion is reduced to nothing. For if his words acknowledge God, his actions absolutely deny him. But I fear that his actions will prove to be of greater weight than

his words; and if those are sins, they will render these also sinful.

He declares that God is infinite in knowledge, in goodness, in justice, and in power. But yet he daily commits abomination in the sight of him, who discerns *the secrets of the heart*, and observes the rise, progress, and consummation of sin.

He lives, moves, and has his being (Acts, xvii. 28.) through the goodness of God, and (if you will believe his professions) he is sensible of it; but yet he delights to grieve his spirit, abuses the endearing instances of his loving kindness, and wears his patience and forbearance.

He boasts of being the servant of a just and righteous God; but yet he transgresses the eternal rules of his justice, and passes on from one degree of iniquity to another.

He knows that there is a great and terrible God, whose power is able to destroy him for ever and ever; and whose vengeance he can neither escape, nor resist; and yet he trifles with the Almighty, and *treasures up wrath against the day of wrath*. (Rom. ii. 5.)

How vain and foolish is the man that imagines that the God of Wisdom will accept of his fruitless professions!

While he imagines this, he must also think, that his knowledge is blinder than the ignorance of men, his goodness a fond and foolish pity, his justice an irresolute weakness, and his power an insignificant terror, *bearing the sword in vain*.

Though he says of him, as *Elijah* in derision did of *Baal*, *He is a God*; yet certainly it is only in derision. And while his sins call for the vengeance of God, he must impiously conceive, that *either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked*. (1 Kings, xviii. 27.)

His faith is so far from extenuating his guilt, that it renders it inexcusable. He believes as the devils do, and he will also tremble with them.

The time will shortly come, when pains and diseases will take hold of him, and death will set all its terrors in array against him; then his sins will compass him about; and *make his bed uneasy in his sickness*. His false professions will

reproach him, and his ineffectual belief will upbraid him.

His body will quake like the earth at the approaches of its dissolution, the rock of his heart will be rent, and the multitude of vices that were buried in forgetfulness, will *arise and come forth*.

But behold him in a yet more miserable state, when the trumpet calls to judgment, and he is constrained to leave the dark hiding place of the grave!

He will see the Judge of all the world sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (Rev. xx. 11, 12.) attending upon him. The books will be opened in which his sins are recorded in everlasting characters, and the sentence ready to be passed.

The very heavens will be on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. iii. 12.); and the general destruction will fill his soul with horror. The ministers of vengeance will stand prepared to seize their wretched prey, as soon as he receives his eternal doom.

How can he stand in that dreadful day? And whither can he fly? He needs no witness to accuse him but himself; a righteous Judge condemns him; and legions of evil spirits torment him. And now he believes and trembles, but in vain!

Let those consider this, who pretend to believe, and yet forget God. Let those especially consider it, who triumph in blaspheming the living God, and glory in profaning his holy name.

Let it be an admonition to these industrious agents of Satan, these inveterate enemies of God and goodness. They will find in *the day of the Lord*, (and may they not find too late), that their admired cavils and objections are as stubble; but the Gospel of Christ is sufficiently tried, and will endure for ever.

May they repent of their wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of their heart may be forgiven them. May they yet be sensible that they are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. (Acts, viii. 22, 23.)

And let us beseech the compassionate Jesus, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, and by his precious death, to deliver us from all blindness and hardness of heart, from all false

doctrine, heresy, and schism, and from all contempt of his word and commandment.

SERMON CXXXV.

by THOMAS NEWLIN, M.A.

The Hand-writing upon the Wall.

DAN. v. 27.

Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

THIS was one dreadful part of the interpretation of the hand-writing upon the wall in the palace of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. At the sight of the hand which wrote upon the plaster of the wall, the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other. (Ver. 5, 6.)

The king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, were drinking in the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple which was at Jerusalem. (Dan. v. 3.) They forgot to give praise and honour to him that liveth for ever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation (Dan. iv. 34.): and instead of the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and whose ways are judgment, and who is able to abase all those that walk in pride (ver. 37.), they praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. (Dan. v. 4.)

In the midst of this luxury, this ingratitude, this idolatry, the same great and terrible God, that had driven *Nebuchadnezzar* from men, and forced him to eat grass with the ox, and afterwards restored him to his glory, and established him in his kingdom (Dan. iv. 32, 36.), was pleased to rebuke the impious *Belshazzar* for neglecting the remarkable admonition and example that was set before him.

And in the same hour (Dan. v. 5.) in which he gave up himself to his sinful pleasures, and wantonly defied his bountiful benefactor, the hand-writing struck

a damp upon all his enjoyments, and stirred up his thoughts to perplex and accuse him.

There was no one present *that could read the writing, or shew the interpretation thereof* (Dan. v. 8.); but his conscience told him, that it pointed to him, and chiefly concerned himself. And *it was like a troubled sea till he sent Daniel, in whom there was an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, to shew the interpretation.* (Ver. 12.)

But the faithful Daniel could yield him no relief; he could only confirm and explain the unacceptable tidings, which his guilty conscience, and his ill-boding apprehension, brought him.

He constrained him to reflect, though the reflection was grievous to him, *that when the heart of his father Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up, and his mind was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oven, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and appointed over it whomsoever he would.* And that he, his careless, and ungrateful son, had not humbled his heart, though he knew all this, and had not glorified the God, in whose hand his breath was, and whose were all his ways.

Therefore, says he, *was the part of the hand sent from him; and this is the writing that was written. God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.* (Dan. v. 20, &c.)

What a shocking consideration was this, that notwithstanding his greatness and power, he was found wanting; and that after he was stripped of all his pomp and state, he would have nothing to recommend him to a just and righteous God, but would be called to give an account of the impious abuse of his important trust! This teaches us a very useful lesson; that there is a God that tries and searches the heart, and weighs all our actions in the balance of impartial

justice; that *has no respect of persons*, and does not esteem us for the multitude of things that we possess, or the splendour of any thing that is great; but principally regards the use that we make of his bounty, and the degrees of our improvement in righteousness and virtue: *and how much soever the glittering shew of riches and honour may engage the admiration of mankind, yet religion is of infinitely greater moment: without this, every thing that the world can bestow upon us, will not at all avail us; for in the sight of God, the nations are as the drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; and he taketh up the isles, as a very little thing (Isa. xl. 15.); and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing without religion.*

This should incline us to remember that we are but sinful dust and ashes, and whatsoever we are possessed of, will add nothing to us, unless we use it to the glory of God. We shall be *found wanting* even in the midst of those flattering objects, that gratify our pride, our avarice, our ambition. And when these are passed away, we shall become the most wretched, contemptible creatures, and be rejected by God, as the dregs and *off-scouring of all things*.

If, therefore, we have any regard to God's approbation, we must give religion the preference to every thing, since that alone will recommend us to his favour.

If we value even our present happiness, we must endeavour so to live, that it may not be lessened by the severe reflections of a guilty conscience.

And if we have any concern for our future welfare, we must make such a provision for ourselves, as will be our stay and support, when all earthly things are consumed. Let us therefore consider,

First, That we should employ the talents which God has given us, in his service, and to his honour.

Secondly, That unless we make this improvement of them, we cannot truly enjoy them in this world. And,

Thirdly, That the abuse of them will rise in judgment against us in the world which is to come. And,

First, We are to consider, that we should employ the talents which God has given us, in his service, and to his honour. The circumstances of Belshazzar were indeed almost peculiar to himself; and amidst all the portions of greatness which are allotted to the sons of men, there is hardly any that can equal that measure of riches, and height of glory, which he profanely abused to the dishonour of his Maker.

But yet the fall of this great man is an admonition to us, in every condition of life; and though our stations are widely different, yet his case, as well as *all other things that were written aforetime, was written for our learning.* (Rom. xv. 4.)

The lowest and the meanest of us is possessed of some advantages, upon which he values himself; and did he value himself aright, he would endeavour to improve them to the glory of the author and giver of every gift, and to the happiness of his immortal soul. For it is not to be imagined, that the God of Wisdom should furnish him with a power of doing good for no end or purpose; and shed his bounty upon his creatures, only that they might, *take their pasture* in this world, and yield up themselves to trifling and vanity. Neither is it reasonable to suppose, that a creature which is formed for an endless duration, should regard no more than his present, transitory state, and look no farther than the immediate gratification of his idle, foolish, sinful inclinations.

We may be assured, that *the Lord that gave his servant five talents*, expected that he should *trade with the same, and make them other five talents, and that he distributed to every man according to his several ability* (Matt. xxv. 15.), with a design that he should answer his kindness with a suitable return.

And if the sense of what we possess, or the prospect of more can encourage us to do our duty, certainly we shall strive to attain to God's future favour, by expressing our gratitude for his present blessings.

For what can be more desirable than that commendation, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will*

make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! (Matt. xxv. 23.)

How wonderful is the goodness of God, that pours his gifts upon us, that we may qualify ourselves for larger measures of his bounty, by making a right use of them!

And how happy is the man that uses them as the means of *letting his light shine before men, and glorifying his Father which is in heaven!* (Matt. v. 16.)

With what satisfaction will he look back upon his past conduct, when he reaps an eternal inheritance from the prudent improvement of uncertain honours, and corruptible riches!

And how shall we ever sufficiently applaud his wisdom, who is rich in good works, and delights chiefly to abound in righteousness!

And I think it may not be improper for us to consider the several opportunities which mankind enjoy of rendering their present condition subservient to their future interest.

For every one has a proper sphere in which he is ordained to move, and in that he is capable of serving his Creator, of being beneficial to his brethren, and of promoting the welfare of his own soul.

Those in the highest ranks and fortunes have indeed the greatest power, and, like the heavenly bodies, may shed their kindly influences upon those beneath them.

But we that are far below, may yet answer the important purposes of an all-wise God; like the inferior works of the creation, none of which were made in vain.

And the capacities of the great are not unworthy our consideration, since they will raise a noble emulation in us, and excite our utmost endeavours to reach after them.

How large and pleasant a prospect is opened to the man, whom God has placed in an exalted station, and entrusted with a plentiful share of the blessings of this life! He is able to assert the cause of God, to promote religion in a corrupt and degenerate age, to recommend it to all his dependents, to invite them into *the path of the just by the shining light* (Prov. iv. 18.) of a good example, and to

discountenance vice and profaneness by his authority. He can act in the stead of God, and be a father to the fatherless, and maintain the cause of the widow. He can raise a dejected spirit, support a sinking family, and come into their relief in the critical juncture, and guard against their approaching calamity. And, in short, he can resemble God, in that beloved attribute, his goodness, and at once copy after the divine nature, and enjoy the sincerest pleasures of humanity: for he can gratify every noble desire, and answer the generous purposes of friendship.

The bare mention of his power, and of the several instances in which it can exert itself, is enough to transport every one that has any sense of gratitude to God, any regard to virtue, any value for that amiable quality which bears the delightful name of good-nature.

And I wish that all whom God has made the stewards of his bounty, would remember the end for which they received that important trust; and that instead of prostituting his gifts to sin and folly, and abusing them to their own and his dishonour, they would employ them in the service of God, and to the advantage of their country, their friends, and their immortal souls.

And we ought not to envy them those opportunities which they enjoy, and which we seem to want; for in the lower conditions of life, there are also means of doing good; and if we are disposed to do it, we may pass our time of sojourning here with comfort and satisfaction, and improve those talents that are delivered to us, to the honour of religion, and to the great ends of friendship and charity.

And even those that are engaged in the servile offices of life, and *go forth to their work and labour till the evening* (Psalm civ. 23.), may also dedicate themselves to the service of God, and promote their own interest, and the common welfare.

And the man that begs for the blessing of God upon all his undertakings, and resolves to do justice to every one, and to make an honest provision for his family, is an object worthy of admiration and esteem; for the holy angels behold him with pleasure, and God himself looks

down upon him with approbation. He builds upon a rock, and that integrity which accompanies him through all his labours, is a strong cement to preserve his small portion of riches unshaken. He leaves a sure inheritance to his children's children; and provides one for himself, which no time can decay, *no wealth nor rust can corrupt.* (Matt. vi. 20.)

And when he comes before God, he will find that his honest principles will stand him in greater stead than all the riches of the world could have done; and though he was not possessed of those things, which are now thought the marks of honour, yet he will be truly esteemed in the sight of God, and he will not be found wanting.

How happily are riches improved, when they are made instrumental to the business of religion, and borrow a new lustre from it, while they seem to give credit to it!

How commendable is the choice of the man, that chooses the one thing needful; and while he has every thing that is desirable in this life, possesses that also which will be eternally valuable in the other!

And how glorious also is the man, who, though he has no pomp or state to attract the eyes of the people, but is placed in the despised circumstances of poverty, is yet adorned with those excellent qualities; that will raise him to the highest honour, and give him a name above every name that the world can give!

Religion, therefore, is the principal thing, and this is the end we ought to aim at, in all conditions of life; for this will render us happy in the lowest state; and without this we cannot be happy in the highest.

And our present interest obliges us to dedicate the good things of this life to the service of religion; for,

Secondly, Unless we make this improvement of them, we cannot truly enjoy them in this world. Common experience teaches us, that there is no lasting pleasure or satisfaction to be found in those flattering objects that now surround us; after a little acquaintance with them, we begin to loath and despise them; and the continuance of those things

which we at first admire, affords us nothing but weariness and vexation.

And if these enjoyments are but uncertain in their best estate, and quickly give way to disquiets, and ungrateful reflections, how vain and deceitful are they, when the mind is oppressed with a load of guilt, and the thoughts of punishment are every moment striking a damp upon it; our mirth is then forced and unnatural, and our spirits are unable to keep up and support it.

And where can we find a wretch so desperate, as to drink to the full of pleasure, and have a true and lively relish of it, when he knows that the most dreadful dangers hang over him, and hang, as it were, by a single hair; and that all his happiness is held by the weakest tenure, even by the blast of life, and is no more in his power than the shadow that departeth?

Surely he must tremble at the thoughts of the hand-writing upon the wall, and his heart cannot but tell him, that *for these things which he fondly doats upon, God will bring him into judgment.* (Eccles. xi. 9.)

How irksome must it be to consider, that his pleasures will shortly come to an end, and will be bitterness at the last; that the riches which he spends in a course of luxury, will aggravate his guilt, and must be one day certainly accounted for; and that his neglected soul will bring a heavy accusation against him, in the time of its distress, and draw his sinful body into a participation of its misery!

How deplorable is his condition, when all his enjoyments are short and transient, and the remembrance of them is disagreeable to him!

But, on the other side, how pleasant is it so to use our talents, as to be able to give a satisfactory account of them, and be assured that we have laid them out to the best advantage!

With what confidence may the rich man look up to God, when he knows that he has discharged his trust, and dispensed his bounty according to the will of his Lord and Master!

How does he delight to see the cause of religion prosper in his hand, to observe the happiness of those whom he

has averted from perishing, to behold the young plants that he has brought up, *flourishing like a tree planted by the water-side* (Psal. 1. 3.), and to find that all his kind and friendly designs answer his expectation!

His happiness is doubled by the delightful view of that of others; and when he thinks with himself, how widely he has spread the blessings of Heaven, and how many he has made partakers with him, his felicity is heightened at the sight of each of them, and his joys increase and multiply.

And when he permits himself to enjoy his innocent pleasures, and to use with cheerfulness those good things which God has provided for him; when he is raised to the highest degree of happiness that can be derived from any thing in this world; a surprising satisfaction is darted in upon him, and his heart is filled with the thought, that he has something much greater prepared for him in another world, and an inheritance that will be securely his, when all earthly riches shall be no more.

And if there is any reason to fear the secret worm of a guilty conscience, that preys upon and destroys the fairest appearance of happiness; if we have any concern for our present comfort and welfare; we must so direct and govern all our actions, that no unwelcome reflection, no astonishing fear may break in upon us; but we may have a true sense of those pleasures that are now offered to us, and a certain prospect of those that are infinitely better.

And if they that live in the abundance of all things, stand in need of the comforts of religion, and cannot but be miserable without them; certainly they that have a smaller portion of the things of this world, are highly obliged, as they tender their own immediate interest, to make religion their choice; for this will sweeten their labours, divert their cares, and enable them to pass their painful life with cheerfulness.

And whensoever the hardships of their narrow circumstances tempt them to complain off their fortune, this will take them off from that ungrateful subject, and enliven them with a cheerful expectation of attaining to that glorious place, in

which they will far, very far excel the highest pitch of worldly grandeur.

And therefore they should be always mindful of their eternal welfare, and not suffer their less important cares to in-croach too much upon them.

Religion is indeed very often excluded by them; but the pretence for it will by no means excuse them: *for it is in vain for them to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows*, if their better part is still neglected, and the soul has no share in the provision which they are making.

It must necessarily strike them with terror, to think, that while they are wearying themselves from day to day, their immortal interest is utterly forgotten; that they disquiet themselves in vain; and, after all they have done, they shall be found wanting.

And yet how many are there, that give up themselves to toil and labour for that which profiteth not, and refuse to set apart one day in seven, or one hour, for their duty to God, lest they should take too much from the time that is spent in a mercenary slavery.

They are ignorant and indifferent as to that which most concerns them; and for the sake of a temporary advantage, which will last but for a few years, or a few generations, they abandon and renounce that happiness which is to endure for ever.

Miserable men, that are regardless of their true interest, and of the end for which they were created!

Neither the cares nor the pleasures of this life should so engage our thoughts, as to lessen our concern for our future welfare. For our powers were given us, that we might work out our salvation; and unless we use them aright, the abuse of them will.

Thirdly, Rise in judgement against us, in the world which is to come. We are now in a state of probation, and God has bestowed his gifts upon us, that we may improve them to our eternal advantage. He watches over and observes us, and is pleased when we answer the gracious designs of his loving kindness.

The same all-seeing eye that was witness to the luxury and profaneness of Belshazzar, and discerned the folly and

baseness of his ungrateful heart, in the night of his feasting, is also present with us, and takes the strictest notice of all our actions: and the same terrible God that sent forth the fingers of a man's hand, to write an accusation against the king, and to record the sentence that passed against him, does also write down all the circumstances of our life, and preserve them in everlasting characters. And in his book is contained the most exact account of all the gifts that we abuse, of all the hours that we spend in sin, and of all the admonitions of our conscience, which fails not to admonish us to make a better improvement of our time.

And though we now imagine that it is unworthy of our care, and wantonly throw away the blessings of God, as if we were born at all adventure; and should be hereafter as though we had never been: yet every idle thought, word, and action (Wisd. ii. 2.) will be brought to our remembrance, and every misspent hour will be charged upon us.

Come on (says the epicure), *let us enjoy the good things that are present: let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this.* (Ver. 6. 9.)

But this portion must be accounted for; and the use of this lot will be mentioned to his condemnation in the great day of recompence.

He is willing to believe that *his name will be forgotten in time, and that no man will have his works in remembrance; that his life will pass away as the trace of a cloud; and be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof.* (Ver. 4.)

But there is a God that distinctly knows how every moment of his life is employed, and will present before him a true and faithful catalogue of his sins; for they are counted by him, *who knows the way where light dwelleth, and as for darkness, where is the place thereof; who has entered into the treasures of the snow, and seen the treasures of the hy'men, who numbers the clouds in, with the beasts the rain as it falls to the 32.),* and be as void drops of dew that *they* surely this was (Job, xxxviii. 19. 22. 3.) misery.

Sinful man may, indeed, for a time put away the consideration of these things, and prevent reflection by a variety of pleasures. Nay, he may bid defiance to his reason, and sin on, in contempt of the ill-boding fears, the dreadful admonition, and-writing that comes forth against him.

But though he refuses to read the writing, or to hear the interpretation thereof, yet it will at last be brought home to him; and when his riches, his honours, and his pleasures, have forsaken him; when he stands a poor wretched soul, before the judgment-seat of an angry God; those actions which he never considered, will be weighed in the balances, and he will be found wanting.

The men that now swell with the spoils of nations, and ungratefully triumph in their undeserved greatness; that despise the poor and fatherless, and rejoice in the multitude of riches, which they have gotten by falsehood and extortion, will be deprived of all their glory, and of that vain shew with which they endeavour to cover their guilty souls; and when they appear before a righteous God, they will be found lighter than vanity itself; and their former grandeur will serve only to increase their damnation.

The wise and learned, that boast of their wonderful improvements, and, in the pride of their hearts, are forgetful of God, the fountain of wisdom; will be charged with the grossest folly, because they have neglected religion, which is the only thing that is valuable in the sight of God.

And they that have entirely devoted themselves to this world, and suffered their cares and labours to engross their time, and stifle the thoughts of God, will be for ever rejected by him, and for ever lament that they made no provision for their souls.

There is no respect of persons with Gods (Rom. ii. 11.) The peasant will stand upon the same level with the prince; and virtue and vice will be the only marks of distinction.

God, behold, invited us all to partake of see what inn. *He has called the great his reason! But too many of them ing his wants, excuse. He has also known. He is into the streets and*

reason and power, and made himself the centre and foundation of all his confidence.

But how vain was his confidence! how weak the foundation of it! *Verily every man living, at his best estate, is altogether vanity!*

While Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace, he saw a dream which made him afraid, and the thoughts upon his bed troubled him. He beheld the resemblance of himself in a tree, which grew, and was strong, whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation, (Dan. iv. 4, 5. 12. 21.)

And it was a just resemblance of him; for his greatness was grown and reached to heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth. (Ver. 22.)

But he also saw an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it. (Ver. 23.)

This dreadful vision, and the interpretation of it, by the prophet Daniel, admonished him of his danger. But the admonition was given in vain. For at the end of twelve months, as he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, he was swoln with pride, and wrapped up in admiration of the house of his kingdom, the might of his power, and the honour of his majesty. (Ver. 29, 30.)

But in the midst of his boasting, there fell a voice from heaven that told him, the kingdom and his reason was departed from him. (Ver. 31.)

Had he only lost his kingdom, though that, in the account of mistaken men, had been a loss greatly to be lamented, yet his reason might have supplied the want of it, and taught him to judge according to God's judgment, who accounteth all the kingdoms of the world as a very little thing, and as the small dust of the balance.

But not only to lose the character of a king, but also the distinguishing character of a man; to be driven from men, and to have his dwelling with the beasts of the field (Dan. iv. 32.), and be as void of understanding as they: surely this was the consummation of misery.

And if we rightly consider this wretched instance of human weakness, neither the splendor of any thing that is great, nor the conceit of any thing that is good in us, will any way withdraw our eyes from looking upon ourselves as sinful dust and ashes.

Our reason is a crown of glory, if we use it to the honour of God; but if we abuse this precious talent to his dishonour, it will only aggravate our misery and shame.

If it were lawful to be proud in any case, this distinguished faculty of man might seem to justify it. But even this is insufficient; and though it shine forth with the most lively piercing rays, though it make us like to the angels, though it be the image of God himself; yet we ought not to grow presumptuous upon it, for pride was not made for men.

I shall therefore take occasion from Nebuchadnezzar's fall, to shew the weakness and uncertainty of our reason, and possess you with an humble sense of it;

First, Because it is subject to natural decay;

Secondly, It is liable to be extinguished by sudden violence; and,

Thirdly, It is frequently impaired and lost by moral corruption. And,

First, Our reason is subject to natural decay. But before we consider it in its declining state, we may humble ourselves by looking back to its weakness and imperfection in our infancy, and observe the slowness of its growth, and the several degrees by which it advances towards maturity. The beginning and end of life conceal this glorious faculty; and it is lost in both, like a river whose source is under the earth, and which hastens to bury itself in the earth again.

In our infancy, it is covered with thick darkness, like the morning spread upon the mountains; in old age, it is no more than the small remains of the day that is departed; and even in the noon of life, and the midst of our perfection, it is often clouded over, and intercepted from our view.

Behold the weak, helpless infant! and see what influence his weakness has upon his reason! He is incapable of discovering his wants, or making his satisfaction known. He is as much directed by the

understanding of others, and stands as much in need of it as if he were not endued with a rational soul; and hardly seems to enjoy the blind and uncertain guidance of natural instinct.

And when his organs are strengthened and gradually prepared for the use of his reason, how faint and feeble is the light that at first discovers itself! and how little can be discerned by the dawning of the understanding! It is unhappily governed by the senses that are inferior to it, and is filled with prejudice and error, by a false report and representation of things.

The faltering efforts of the babbling tongue betray our ignorance, and shew the vain and trifling notions that have stolen in upon us.

Even in the second stage of life, and the flower of our youth, though we do not altogether speak as a child, and think as a child, yet our reason is hurried away with impetuous violence, and derives its judgment from our irregular passions and partial affections. It deceives itself with false appearances of happiness, and tortures and disquiets the mind with extravagant hopes and expectations. Like the rising sun, it drives nothing but mists before it, and with difficulty attains to its full brightness.

But in the state of manhood, you will say, that our reason displays itself with an excellent glory, and bears a beautiful resemblance of the Fountain of Light.

Yet still it might be urged, that the thoughts of mortal men are feeble, and our devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things; and hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us.

But however we may, without indulging our vanity, or rather to rebuke and mortify it, we may allow that reason does, for a short time, exert itself with an active and lively force. It gathers the experience of former ages, and enlarges its prospect beyond the life of man, to many generations to come. It looks into the secrets of nature with a searching eye, and discovers many important truths, by

its diligent inquiries, and curious observations. It furnishes the mind with a regular train of thoughts, and lays up the maxims of wisdom and policy in the storehouse of the memory.

But, alas! it does not continue in one stay; but as soon as it is advanced to perfection, it declines apace, and falls away to imperfection again.

In our pursuit of knowledge, we seem to be rolling up a stone to the top of a mountain, which does not rest a moment there, but with haste and violence rolls down to the bottom.

Our sun does not stand still in the midst of heaven; but before we can entirely enjoy the delightful view that we have gained by its ascent, it snatches us from it, by its sudden and precipitate descent.

Our largest thoughts are soon contracted, and the mind is lessened and confined to narrower notions and opinions.

The memory is too frail to retain the characters that were stamped upon it; and though they were deeply engraven as with a pen of iron, yet our heart becomes as the melting wax, and loses the impression.

Have we not known the most valuable treasures gathered together by long experience? and have we not concluded that they could never be wiped out of the book of remembrance? But how soon were they lost? *we went by, and lo, they were gone; we sought them, but their place could no where be found.*

The most artful contrivances, and the justest thoughts and conclusions, are broken and confounded by the infirmities of age. And those loose fragments that still continue, how valuable soever in themselves, are no more than the imperfect remains of distant antiquity; and they are often covered with dust, and it is hard to draw them out of the general ruin, and join them together.

And instead of the regular government of reason, there is little to be found but childish imaginations, or indolent dotage.

The preference, indeed, is frequently given to age, on the account of its wisdom and experience; but this is rather a sense of past follies, than a new supply of wisdom. And the aged having suffered shipwreck on the dangers of human life, are

therefore most capable of directing the unexperienced youth, to avoid the like miscarriages.

It is a melancholy truth, that our reason is affected with the corruptions of the body; and though widely different from it in its nature, is influenced by its several changes, and partakes of its improvement and decay.

And though in death it is divided from it, and breaks forth from its earthly prison, 'to ascend to God that gave it; yet during its continuance here, it is forced to be conformable to this wretched state, and to suffer or rejoice with the members of the body.

It sees but through a glass darkly; and the glass is sullied with every vapour, and brings a mist over the understanding.

Alas! who can bear this consideration? who can think of these things, and not be abashed and confounded? Is this our admired reason? Was this once a *pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty*? Was this once adorned with the brightness of the Everlasting? Was this the unspotted mirror, and the image of God's wisdom? How is it changed by our fall! how different is it from the reason of our first parent, that did not manifest itself by slow degrees, but shone forth at once a full and perfect day!

How long might this lamp of God have given light to us! even for ever and ever, like the seven lamps of fire that are burning day and night before the throne! But how soon is its oil spent! How soon is our vessel empty! The trembling flame hastens to depart from us, and is every moment fluttering and going away. So frail is our reason! So just an occasion does it afford for humility, if we consider it only as subject to natural decay! But how much more will it afford, if we consider it,

Secondly, As it is liable to be extinguished by sudden violence. And here I might observe, that every trifle in nature is capable of offering violence to it. And though it is placed on a throne, and intrusted with authority and power, yet it is easily moved from its place, and deposed by the tumultuous passions.

It cannot bear a surprize, or excess of joy, or an oppressive weight and continu-

ance of sorrow; its edge is often taken away by too close an attention to one thing; and it is as often distracted by troubling itself with many.

If it is not exercised and employed, it sinks into a brutish stupidity, and is so far from bearing the likeness of God, that it hardly retains the appearance of a man: it buries itself in the heavy matter to which it is united, and seems to be falling into the dust, with its companion, the body.

And if it exercises itself too much, it spends and exhausts its strength: the variety of thoughts confound it, and the earnestness and intenseness of them, spins the thread too fine, and breaks the chain that held them together.

But passing over these dangers, we may proceed to consider the deplorable effects of violent diseases, and the ruin and havoc which they make in the understanding. When the animal spirits are raised into a ferment, and the wild imagination has cast off the government of reason, what confusion and disorder rise in the mind! A thousand false appearances impose upon it; and it deludes itself with the vainest thoughts, vainer than even the dreams of the night; wanders to and fro, without fixing upon any thing; and has not wisdom to discern either good or evil. The distracted man resembles him that was possessed by an evil spirit; he oftentimes jalleth into the fire, and oft into the water; he dwells in desolate places, and it is hard to bind him, even with chains; he is always crying, and cutting himself with stones.

What a miserable creature is the man whose reason is either departed from him, or has not power enough to restrain his passion, or prevent the outrage that he offers to himself!

There cannot be a more mortifying spectacle to men; there can hardly be a more pleasing one to the enemy of mankind, than such a distracted creature, that preys upon himself, and is the object of his own remorseless cruelty, and brutish fury.

And the case of the idiot also bespeaks our deep concern and humility.

This unhappy case is not always owing to an original defect in nature, but frequently proceeds from a surprizing

shock and alteration. And the man that was just now endued with reason, and a sufficient portion of understanding, is in an instant deprived of it, and loses all the notices and distinctions of things. His mind is as it were blotted out, or covered with a veil that cannot be taken off. And he lives, moves, and has his being, without any sense or notion of it, and seems to continue in life, only to shew his weakness, and expose the multitude of his infirmities.

And the clearest understanding is liable to this universal failure, if the brain be bereaved of its usual supply of spirits, or oppressed with too quick a return of them, and too great a charge. The straining or slackening of the nerves disturbs the harmony of the thoughts, and a fatal bruise breaks the whole frame of the mind.

Dreadful also are the consequences of a palsy or apoplex, which strikes with an unexpected force, and leaves only a languishing life, and a confused understanding.

One part of the body becomes a dead uncomfortable weight to the other; and, while the withered members can scarcely bear each other's weakness, reason is also bereaved of its natural quickness, and forgets its past conceptions, losing the miserable remainder of life in the sleep of a lingering death.

And these fatal strokes not only impair it, but frequently extinguish it at once.

Let us suppose a man to be in the most perfect state that ever was enjoyed in this world :

Let his reason have the most piercing sagacity in discerning, the most curious eye in observing, and the most faithful memory to retain its observations :

Let his judgment be enriched with all the wisdom of former ages, his knowledge extend to every art and science, and spread itself over them, as the waters cover the seas :

Let him understand the interests of courts, the state of nations, the conducting of armies :

Let him form the most complete body of laws, to govern future generations, and weave the closest schemes of policy, to establish the regular succession of princes :

Let his resolutions be steadfast, his pur-

poses generous, and his soul as diffusive as charity itself :

And, above all, let him be thoroughly acquainted with the fountains of wisdom, the holy Scriptures; let him understand their glorious truths, as far as they can be comprehended by human reason; and pay the most awful regard to those sublimer mysteries that pass man's understanding. Yet at the height of this perfection, if his blood should break through its appointed bounds, and that dreadful messenger of death, an apoplex, should arrest him; his reason will go down in the midst of his course, and no more send forth its enlivening beams upon earth; his memory will lose all the stores that were distinctly ranged within it; his judgment will be spoiled of all its wisdom; his knowledge will be turned into darkness, his policy untravelling, his resolutions broken, his generous intentions disappointed, his precepts of morality erased, and his divine conceptions scattered away.

How terrible is this change! how amazing this devastation!

And though perhaps it is impossible to find the man that can entirely answer the character that we have drawn; yet we may remember (but we must remember it with the greatest regret) that a late fatal seizure bereaved the world of one (Dr. Smalridge) of the noblest capacities that ever was filled with divine and human learning.

And the church must for ever bewail the surprizing death of an excellent prelate, under whose shadow she thought herself safe at the close of the evening, though he was snatched from her at the opening of the morning,

But she must weep for herself, not for him, for he is numbered amongst the saints, and shines like the stars in the firmament.

It is indeed an afflicting consideration that reason is subject to natural decay, that it is also liable to be extinguished by sudden violence. But these are only to be lamented, as misfortunes incident to our nature.

But there is a more afflicting consideration arises from our faults. For,

Thirdly, It is frequently impaired and lost by moral corruption. Our reason, though of a purer substance and greater

excellence than the body, is yet affected by its union with it, and disordered by the infirmities that attend it; and not only by its unavoidable infirmities, but by its chosen corruptions; and every vice weakens its power and sullies its light; and as the violence of the will and the irregularity of the affections increases, the authority of reason is lessened, and the force of its discernment gradually taken away.

The gratification of our passions destroys its vital frame; gluttony stifles it; and drunkenness overpowers it, like a rapid stream that has broken down its proper bounds.

The fumes that rise from a loaded stomach darken the understanding; and excess in drinking disturbs the order of the thoughts, and fills the mind with absurd incoherent trifles; and an habitual compliance with our sinful lusts, changes our justest conceptions of things into stupid dotage and forgetfulness.

Reason, when it is made subservient to vice, is condemned to Nebuchadnezzar's fate, *it is driven from men, and forced to dwell with the beasts*. And instead of ascending to the presence of God, it is held captive in the loathsome prisons of sin.

There is nothing that more effectually shews the weakness of reason than its yielding to our vicious appetites, and stooping down to corruption.

And to convince us how little we should depend upon it, and how unsafe it is to lean to our own understanding, God is sometimes pleased to permit even the wisest of men, men that are endued with the greatest abilities, the sharpest wit, and the deepest learning, to depart from the dignity of their nature, and prostitute their glorious faculties to the service of the most shameful sins.

Hence they are often unequal to themselves in their conduct, and act inconsistently with their own judgment. Hence they are exposed to the scorn even of the weak and ignorant, and are made a rebuke to the foolish.

And better were it for them to live in Egyptian darkness, than to act in contempt of the plainest conviction, and offend their reason and conscience, which

shed such an abundance of light upon them.

What a remarkable instance of human frailty was Solomon; *How wise was he in his youth, and as a flood filled with understanding! His soul covered the whole earth, and the largeness of his heart was even as the sand on the sea shore*, (Eccles. xlvii. 14, 15.) *He spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: He spake also of beasts and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes*. (1 Kings, iv. 33.)

And above all, he shewed the excellence of his understanding in choosing wisdom rather than riches and honour; and in adorning the temple of God with the most beautiful glory.

Yet this seemingly perfect man was ensnared by the love of strange women, and turned away his heart from the Lord. *With many fair speeches they caused him to yield; with the flattering of their lips they forced him to follow other gods*.

And so miserably was he deluded, that he went after the goddess of the Zidonians, the abomination of Moab, and even Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

And so far did he debase himself, as to fall down and worship every idol that the multitude of his wives and concubines set up.

So vain and weak a thing is human reason!

Having gone through the several particulars proposed, let me draw a few practical inferences from them. And,

First, Since our reason advances by a slow and difficult progress, and then hastens to decay; let us possess ourselves with an humble opinion of it, and never entertain haughty and presumptuous thoughts.

Let us look into the deep things of God, as the angels do, with a religious awe and reverence, and let us never be so vain and insolent as to reject those important truths that exceed the measure of our capacities, or to disbelieve every thing that we cannot entirely comprehend.

It was pride (as we may justly pre-

sume) that cast down Lucifer from heaven.

When Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. (Dan. v. 20.)

And when Herod received the blasphemous applause of the people, and gave not God the glory, the angel of the Lord smote him, and he gave up the ghost. (Acts, xii. 23.)

And pride is the fountain of all those errors and heresies, that overspread the world with so mighty a deluge, that every good man cannot but tremble for the ark of God.

But if we consider the growth and different measures of our own capacities, and the vastly greater difference of others, we shall see the folly of making our judgment the standard of truth, and disdaining to receive any thing that is not exactly equal to it.

In our infancy we have no conception of many things that afterwards are easy and obvious to us. The first opening of the understanding shews us but a confused and doubtful prospect, and we resemble the blind man, who as soon as he was restored to sight, *looked up and said, I see men, as trees, walking.* (Mark, viii. 24.)

But when our understanding is enlarged, we attain to a plainer discernment, as *he saw every man clearly* (vers. 25.), when he was blessed with a more perfect recovery.

The discoveries of latter ages have brought us to the knowledge of many arts and sciences that were hid from the former: and it cannot enter into the hearts of some to conceive, what others justly believe; and that which seems impossible to some men, is possible with others.

And therefore since limited creatures are not all confined to the same measure, but enlarge their knowledge to different degrees, certainly we should allow that the infinite wisdom of God does extend itself beyond the utmost compass of our thoughts.

Even our senses are capable of improvement, and may be enlivened with a quicker perception of their proper ob-

jects. And were God to give us a larger number of senses, we might be acquainted with a greater variety of objects, and behold a wider scene open before us.

And if this may not improperly be supposed of our senses, we may upon better grounds suppose, that God, in his due time, will exalt our reason to a more comprehensive view than it yet enjoys.

How foolish and slow of heart to believe, were the two disciples that went to Emmaus! (Luke, xxiv.) Though they conversed with their Saviour, and heard him expound the scriptures concerning himself, yet he seemed to be only a stranger in Israel.

Their hearts burned within them indeed, while he talked with them by the way; but till *their eyes were opened, they knew him not.*

And in like manner, we are for a long time held in ignorance of those things that are not difficult in themselves, and are written in so plain a character, that *he that runs may read them.*

And as in the progress of our reason, we obtain new measures of knowledge, so in its decay, our mind loses them again, and becomes as if it had never obtained them.

We should therefore bring every thought into subjection to God, and wait with patience and submission till that great and glorious day when our reason will shine forth, as at the first, and be raised to the immediate enjoyment of the fountain of light.

Secondly, Since it is liable to be extinguished by sudden violence, let us embrace the present opportunity, and exercise this distinguishing faculty, while it is yet in its perfect brightness.

The accepted time, the day of salvation, is but of a short continuance, and *the night will quickly come, in which no man can work.* And before it is yet night, our lamp may be snatched away, *our candlestick be removed.* And if we survive our reason, we cannot live to answer the purposes of life; for we shall be incapable of performing a reasonable service.

And though it should not be totally extinguished, yet if it is much impaired, our virtue will be a very imperfect obla-

lion; and the blind and maimed cannot be an acceptable sacrifice to God.

Let us therefore devote our reason to the author and giver of it, while it bears the liveliest resemblance of him that gave it.

Let us use it aright this very moment; and let not the day depart from us before we have done our duty, lest our sun should rise no more.

Thirdly and lastly, Since our reason is frequently impaired and lost by moral corruption, let us abstain from sin, that has so fatal an effect upon it, and never quench this heavenly flame by offering unnatural violence to it.

Let us employ it as it ought to be employed, in meditating upon the law of God, and finding out the treasures of divine wisdom.

This will daily improve it, and give a larger compass to our thoughts and conceptions. Our capacities will extend themselves, and the purest pleasures will flow into them, and yield us perfect satisfaction.

If we are enslaved by sin, we may indeed imagine, that the impairing our reason will give us peace and security. But it is a false and treacherous peace; and how much soever we weaken our reason, yet the dreadful day will come when it will recover its strength, and execute revenge upon us.

If we admire it only as the atheists do, and abuse it to the denial of God, we degrade our nature. For, according to the atheists' opinion, it is barely corruptible matter; it sprung from the womb of the earth, and all its admired thoughts perish in the grave.

But if we believe it to be the gift of God, and make a grateful use of it; though it is subject to natural decay; though it may be, for a time, extinguished by a sudden violence; yet it will live hereafter, in a better state, where no decay, no violence, no corruption, can come near to hurt it.

SERMON CXXXVII.

BY THOMAS NEWLIN, M.A.

Fear and Disquiet the necessary Consequences of Sin.

[Preached before the University of Oxford, at Magdalene College, on St. John Baptist's Day, 1720.]

ISAIAH, lviii. 20, 21.

The wicked are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

THE God of Justice and Power has threatened to *rain storm and tempest upon the wicked: This shall be their portion in the other world*, (Psal. xi. 6.)

And there is nothing can give us so just a notion of their distractions, their anguish, their confusion, even in this life, as the comparison which the Holy Spirit of God has made in the words of the text.

When they are labouring under a sense of guilt, and an apprehension of punishment, their restless minds are wrought up into the highest ferment, torn with contrary passions, and tossed to and fro with fear and anxiety: and as the boiling waters *cast up mire and dirt from the bottom of the great deep*, so the raging waves of their troubled hearts throw up all their filth and corruption from their secret hiding places, and are *perpetually foaming out their own shame*. (Jude, 13.)

When their iniquity comes up before them, it covers them with *the blackness of darkness*. And when the light breaks in upon them, it affrights them, like the sudden flashes of lightning, which add horror to the night of storm and tempest.

This is actually their case, as we are assured by him who knows the secrets of the heart, and thoroughly discerns the passion, the shame, the fear, the melancholy and despair which torment a wounded spirit.

And as they do actually suffer this amazing punishment, so it is absolutely necessary that they should; for it is grounded upon the unchangeable nature of things, and the eternal difference be-

tween good and evil: and how much soever the masters in iniquity may boast of their imaginary strength; though they promise themselves liberty and peace, and in the pride of their hearts pretend to enjoy the greatest satisfaction; yet their hopes are vain, their promises deceitful; *For there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Their sins are spears and arrows, and they pierce them through like a sharp sword; and they know not which way to turn themselves, for they have no grounds to support their confidence.*

And we ought to adore the goodness of God for making their guilt so uneasy to them: for if we have any tenderness for ourselves, certainly this immediate punishment of sin must deter us from *walking in the counsel of the ungodly*: or if we are so foolish as to purchase this disquiet, by entering into the paths of wickedness; yet as soon as we have gotten this sad experience, one would think it should effectually discourage us from *standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful.* (Psal. i. 1.) That it may have this happy effect upon us, Let us,

First, Consider the dreadful condition of those men, who are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. And,

Secondly, The causes of their disquiet, or why *there can be no peace to the wicked.*

And, first, We are to consider the dreadful condition of those men, who are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The great Creator of the world has placed every thing in a wonderful order; but he has shewn the exactest care in man, the chief of his earthly creatures. All his faculties are appointed to answer some important end, and are placed in a regular subordination to one another for the certain attainment of it. And whilst he obeys the Author of his being, and keeps the rank in which he was ordained to move, there is a most delightful harmony in his breast; his reason commanding him to do his duty; his affections quickening him in the performance of it; his will rejoicing to discharge it; and his conscience applauding him

for it, and giving a pleasing foretaste of the favour and approbation of God.

But if he indulges his sinful appetites, his affections become unruly, and get the dominion over him; his will urges him on to his destruction at the command of every passion; his reason is forced to stoop to those actions which it loaths and abhors; and his conscience continually pursues him with the just complaints of the injuries which he has offered to it.

And the punishment which he inflicts upon himself is the more grievous, because *the arrow sticks fast in him, and cleaves to his soul.* There are many arguments to alleviate and take off the edge of worldly evils which can bring no relief under the torments of a guilty conscience. For those are sometime at a distance from us, and we may hope to escape, or partly divert them; or if they fall upon us, they may only affect the body, while the mind retires into itself and enjoys its proper happiness. But the sinner has no place to flee unto; no fence against himself. He is his own tormentor, and the sense of his sin and folly possesses all the retirements of his heart, and fills every faculty of his soul. It is *about his path, and about his bed, and follows him in all his ways.*

And that all-seeing God, who is present with us in every occurrence, and in every thought, will not suffer him to escape from his bosom-enemy, but constrains him to cry out in the bitterness of his anguish, *Whither shall I go from my wounded spirit? Whither shall I go from his presence? If I endeavour to climb up into heaven, it oppresses me with a weight that is intolerable: If I go down to hell, there it will be as a worm that will never die; a fire that never will be quenched: If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, there I shall behold a resemblance of my condition; and when I hear the sea and the waves roaring, and see the hearts of men sailing them for fear, I shall feel a greater disorder in my own breast, and be more violently shaken with the confusion of my own thoughts: If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, the ungrateful light will shew my guilt; and display*

all my shame, with a bright and glaring evidence.

It was this sense of guilt, this terrible conviction, that stung the accursed Cain, when he said unto the Lord, *my punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold (says he) thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face I shall be hid. And I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.* (Gen. iv. 13, 14.) But his punishment was rendered more exquisite by a firm assurance, that though he wandered to and fro, he could not fly from himself, and whosoever he was, he would still be found out by this his enemy. In the most distant countries he would be forced to hear the cries of his conscience; and every one whom he met would bring to his remembrance the murder of his brother.

The conscience of the wicked is always writing bitter things against them, and every accident renews the thoughts of their past iniquity, and takes off the veil of forgetfulness; and it appears in all its horror and deformity in the day of evil: when outward calamities straiten and besiege them, then they feel the most sharp and piercing agonies within: and when the world frowns upon them, they can have no comfort from themselves; no prospect of any thing but hell gaping before them.

How did the hearts of Joseph's brethren smite and reproach them when they were driven by famine into Egypt, whither they had sent their innocent brother, and when they were brought into a seeming necessity, either of snatching the comforts of Jacob's old age from his affectionate embraces, or of suffering bonds, imprisonment, and death! Then they were forced to acknowledge, that *they were very guilty concerning their brother*; and they could expect no relief, no compassion, because they saw *the anguish of his soul when he besought them, and they would not hear*; and were their affliction the greatest that could be endured, yet they could not but allow of the equity of their punishment; *therefore is this distress come upon us.* (Gen. xlii. 21.)

Guilt is naturally attended with fear and suspicion; and the soul that is pol-

luted with it, is in perpetual dread of a watchful eye that looks down upon it, and an almighty hand that is ready to punish it. And the least appearance of danger sounds the alarm, and all its sins throng forth, as if they were awakened by the surprising summons, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.*

We have a very remarkable instance of this sudden apprehension, this surprising fear, in the licentious Herod. This great wicked man feared the impartial John the Baptist, because he was a just man and an holy. But he feared him much more, when he had sacrificed the preacher of righteousness to the impetuous demands of the wanton Herodias, and rashly permitted her to execute revenge upon him. *When the fame of the blessed Jesus was spread abroad, for the mighty works that were done by him and his disciples, king Herod heard of him, and he said, that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works did shew forth themselves in him.* (Mark, vi. 14.)

Others pleased themselves with uncertain conjectures concerning him, saying, *that it is Elias; or that it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.* (Mark, vi. 15.) But Herod could not but make a conclusion, that filled him, with horror. *It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.* (Ver. 16.)

Though he knew not of any resurrection, yet his guilt told him that he was actually risen; and he believed that he was come to proclaim his own innocence, and bring him to an account for his injustice and cruelty; and that *therefore mighty works did shew forth themselves in him* (vers. 14.), to give testimony to the integrity of John, and discover the guilt of the murderer.

And we may suppose, that when *the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many* (Mat. xxvii. 51, 52, 53.), then Herod feared greatly, and his heart was shaken and rent like the rocks, and the dark corners of it were opened, and all his sins came forth and

appeared to him; and he could not but say of St. John, as the Centurion did of the crucified Jesus, *Certainly this was a righteous man!* (Luke, xxiii. 47.)

How was the perfect and upright Job affected with his sufferings, when God seemed to have forsaken him, and was pleased to try him in the furnace of affliction! *The arrows of the Almighty (says he) are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirits; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.* (Job, vi. 4.--vii. 11.)

And yet he had this to comfort him, that he suffered not for any iniquity in his hands, that his prayer was pure, that he could say with confidence, *Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.* (Job, xvi. 17. 19.)

How much more then must the wicked endure, who are assured that they have provoked an Almighty enemy! *Their sins testify against them, their transgressions are with them, and as for their iniquities, they know them.* They have sinned presumptuously, and forfeited the favour of God, and he has set them as a mark against him, so that they are a burden to themselves. (Job, vii. 20.) *When they lie down, they say when shall we arise, and the night be gone? and they are full of tossings to and fro, to the dawning of the day.* (Job, vii. 4.) *When they say, our bed shall comfort us, our couch shall ease our complaint, then they are scared with dreams, and terrified with visions.* (Job, vii. 13, 14.)

Of this we have experience, whensoever we have done any sinful action. It troubles our thoughts, and interrupts our rest by night with a confused consciousness of guilt, and a dreadful expectation of punishment: and before we are entirely awake in the morning, we find a clog upon our spirits; and though we cannot distinctly remember the occasion of it, our heart tells us there is a heavy charge against us, which strikes a damp upon the enjoyments of the following day; and the upbraiding remembrance of it still returns, and as often as we look into our breasts, our shame rises before us.

A guilty conscience always casts up its loathsome burthen, like those burning mountains that throw up fire out of their bowels, or like the damned, *the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.* (Rev. xiv. 11.)

We see the consummation of misery in the treacherous Judas, when he repented of his falsehood to his Lord, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, to the chief priests and elders, saying, *I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood,* (Matt. xxvii. 9. 4.)

They treated him with the utmost contempt, and said, *What is that to us? see thou to that;* and he was also despised by himself, and became the object of his own hatred and indignation, so that his soul chose strangling and death rather than his life. (Job, vii. 15.)

And into this restless state the sinner will certainly fall unless he makes haste to be reconciled to God. For all his arts will be ineffectual and unable to lull his conscience into a lasting security. The closest train of pleasures will have some interruption; the loudest noise of mirth will be silenced by the cries of guilt; and though he endeavour to strengthen himself in iniquity, yet the number of his sins will not render him altogether insensible of fear, they will only heap up wrath against the day of wrath, and the evils which he has multiplied against himself, will one day find him out.

When the hour of calamity or sickness comes upon him, the sins of his youth will rise in judgment against him, and the black catalogue of vices which he endeavoured to erase or conceal, will appear in plain and indelible characters; when he casts up the account of his sins, he shall be seized with fear and trembling, and his own iniquities shall convince him to his face (Wisd. iv. 20.): his conscience will constrain him to attend to other accusations, and will not permit the temples of his head to take any rest (Psal. cxxxii. 4.); he has no hopes in this life, no prospect of happiness in the other. His present condition is too grievous to be borne, and his expectation is full of misery. He has no stay or support, no anchor to hold him fast, but is driven about and tossed by the violence

of a tempest which can never be stilled. He can never entertain the least thoughts of peace, but is at utter enmity with his reason, with his conscience, with his God.

And now what is the hope of the hypocrite though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east-wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and, as a storm, hurleth him out of his place. (Job, xxvii. 8. 20, 21, 22.) For God casts upon him, and will not spare, he would sweep him out of his hand; but there is no escaping, for horrible is the end of the unrighteous. (Wisd. iii. 19.) Which brings me to consider,

Secondly, The causes of their disquiet, or why there can be no peace to the wicked.

And the first and plainest cause of it, is a natural sense of the baseness and malignity of sin. We must necessarily trace it from this; for it could not so generally prevail, were it not essential to the nature of man, and were there not a real difference between good and evil.

In all nations and ages, fear and disquiet have been the inseparable companions of guilt, and no circumstances of life could be a sufficient guard against them. And God has made us liable to suffer the stings of conscience, that the wicked might not go unpunished in any state or condition; and though they should seem to prosper, yet they might have a secret worm to prey upon and consume all their enjoyments.

And this will always be the case as long as reason has any authority in the world. For the mind of man is endued with a power of distinguishing between good and evil; and it does not form uncertain, arbitrary notions of things, but judges by a standing rule, and cannot easily depart from its regular judgment. When virtue and vice present themselves before it, it presently perceives that the one is repugnant, and the other agreeable to it; and the more it meditates upon them, so much the more it confirms its first dislike, and ratifies its just approbation; and it is not in the power of fancy or inclination to reverse the sentence. For the nature of things is not subservient

to a wanton humour, or to be bent and turned by our unreasonable desires.

Hence it is, that the sinner has such a mighty contest with himself before he can break through the restraints that are laid upon him. He cannot but know that he is acting to the prejudice of his reason, his reputation, and his interest; and must endure many throes and agonies, give a terrible shock to his nature, and overturn its beautiful order, before he can descend to the commission of a sin.

And he cannot entirely conquer his reluctance; for when he complies with the flattering temptation, he blushes at the thoughts of it, and yields with trembling knees, and a misgiving heart.

And though he would imagine for a time that all is well, when the use of his reason is suspended, and his senses are wrapt up in the enjoyment of sinful pleasures, yet he cannot long enjoy the delusion. For nothing that is unnatural can be lasting; and, notwithstanding all his endeavours, he must return to himself.

And then with what disdain does he behold the loathsome object? With what reproaches does he accuse himself of folly! He discerns the baseness and deformity of sin; and can hardly bear to remember (and yet he must remember), that he is fallen from the dignity of a rational creature, and become more contemptible than the worm that crawleth upon the ground.

Though he labours often to reconcile himself to his great enemy, yet he cannot subdue his aversion, or prevail over his impartial thoughts; for they will sometimes exert themselves, and whensoever they do, his sin will be unable to stand the test of his serious consideration.

Reason will find some sober intervals in which it will call him to an account; some melancholy hours, in which it will reprove, upbraid, torment him.

The heathen had this sense of things to give testimony against their sinful actions; and as they concluded that virtue should be chosen, were it considered only as its own reward; so they were fully convinced that vice was to be avoided, were there no other consequence of it but its immediate punishment.

And their fabulous descriptions of a state of misery, and of whips, and scor-

pions, and furies, were derived from the real anguish which they felt within themselves, and from the severe lashes, the sharp stings, the restless indignation of their own minds.

And this judgment of sin has universally prevailed, and virtue recommended itself by its natural worth and excellence; and vice would have been condemned had there been no law to condemn it.

Another cause of the disquiet that attends a sinful state, is the expectation of a future judgment, which had taken root in the minds of men, even before God had declared unto us, that *he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world* (Acts, xvii. 31.), and the person that should administer justice in that solemn trial.

For the privilege of reason, which renders us far more excellent than the inferior ranks of creatures, does also render us capable of giving an account of our actions; and as it was natural to conclude that we were the work of an all-wise Being, so it was reasonable to expect that he should call us to answer for the discharge or abuse of our great trust.

And every man has in himself a lively emblem of the manner of proceeding in the future examination, and an earnest of the sentence that will be pronounced. For we find a tribunal erected in our hearts, and a judge sitting upon it, and summoning all our thoughts, words, and actions, to appear before it.

We are brought to this careful review, though our wills strive against it; and we cannot but judge of them according to their different nature and qualities, though we would fain confound the distinction, and *call evil good, and good evil*.

When we do well, our conscience tells us, *that we shall be accepted*. *When we do ill*, it is not to assure us, *that sin lieth at the door*; and it whispers to us, *that we should stand in awe of this bosom witness and judge, because it bears not the sword in vain; that it is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon them that do evil* (Rom. xiii. 4.); and therefore it concerns us to pay a deference to it, because there is a higher court in which we must appear, a greater tribunal at which we

must stand to give an account to a just and righteous God.

And this expectation of a judgment to come, has frequently checked the merry sinner, and interrupted his mirth and jollity; and whilst he has been *walking in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes*, he has been troubled with the ill-boding admonition, *Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*. (Eccles. xi. 9.) And the bare possibility of it is enough to confound and distract even those that will not believe any more.

Since, then, *the wicked are like a troubled sea, when it cannot rest*, and their disquiet is the necessary consequence of sin; let us consider the folly of embracing it for the sake of any temptation. The pleasures that attend it are imaginary and transient; *And it is even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh, but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul has appetite*. (Isa. xxix. 8.) But the fear, the anxiety, the confusion, and remorse, that immediately follow it, are real and lasting.

Can there then be any advantage or pleasure in sin that will be a sufficient recompence for the loss of the peace of our minds? Can we be so foolish as to gratify our vicious appetites, when within a moment we shall be constrained to censure our past conduct, and reflect upon it with shame? Were we to gain the highest honours, or the greatest riches, yet they could not render us unmindful of our misery. All the arts of the flatterer, and the loudest applause of the multitude, cannot raise the spirits of the man that is condemned by himself. The weight of guilt oppresses him, and he is dejected and dismayed, because he cannot but be conscious of it.

And his own endeavours are as ineffectual to relieve him as those of others. For he sees through the mist which he would cast before his eyes, and loaths the absurdity of his own vain flattery.

Though he tries to hide his iniquity in the deepest secrecy, yet his troubled heart will cast up its mire and dirt.

Though he sometimes seems to be falling into a little slumber, yet it only serves to heighten his misery when he is surprised in it, and forced to awake: *For there is no peace (saith my God) to the wicked.* Let him make haste to escape, and fly whithersoever he will, yet the storm will reach him, and he cannot screen himself from its violence.

And at the last day, when the sea, and death and hell shall give up their dead (Rev. xx. 13.), then shall all his iniquity come forth, and the innumerable multitude of his sins shall accuse him before the dreadful tribunal.

And, after the terrible sentence is pronounced, he will be cast into a sea of fire, where his body will be tormented with the most exquisite pains, and his soul will eternally suffer the vengeance of an injured conscience, and an offended God.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

By THOMAS NEWLIN, M. A.

Pleasure and Peace the certain Consequences of Virtue.

Prov. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

WHEN God had given Solomon wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore (1 Kings, iv. 29.), he indulged himself in the enjoyment of every pleasure, and whatsoever his eyes desired he kept not from them, that he might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. (Eccles. ii. 3. 10.) And he that had opened the treasures of nature, that had made silver in Jerusalem as stones (2 Chron. ix. 27.), and was raised to the highest pitch of earthly glory and happiness; he was fully convinced, that religion was preferable to the most exquisite of sensual pleasures, to all the satisfaction that riches could bestow, and to all the kingdoms of the world,

decked with their ensnaring beauties, and set off with their brightest lustre.

He that was most capable of determining which is the true wisdom, has delivered this certain truth; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy, is understanding.* (Prov. ix. 10.) And as the result of all his experience, he says; *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right-hand, and in her left-hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* (Prov. iii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.)

And one would think there should need no further inducement to the practice of virtue; and that the singular pleasure that flows from it, would sufficiently enforce an exhortation to it.

That you may no longer be deceived by the artifices of the tempter, or discouraged by the ill report that he has made of religion, let me desire you to call to mind the sincere pleasure and satisfaction that you have enjoyed in the very instant that you have done any virtuous action; whilst I prove,

First. That the pleasures of religion are more noble, delightful, and lasting, than the pleasures of sin; and,

Secondly, That the practice of it keeps us in perpetual peace and safety, and supports us in the needful time, and brings us peace at the last. (Psal. xxxvii. 38.)

And, first, that the pleasures of religion are more noble, delightful, and lasting, than the pleasures of sin. They are far more noble, as the soul, that is chiefly conversant in them, far exceeds the body; and, as the objects from whence they are derived; are superior to those that gratify our senses.

If we value ourselves upon the distinguishing privileges that are vouchsafed to us, and think it our glory, that we are above the beasts that perish, we must also conclude, that the happiness of the better

part of our being, and the satisfaction that is agreeable to our reason, are much more desirable than those pleasures that we enjoy in common with the lower ranks of beings: for unless we measure the distance between us and them, by the different degrees of happiness for which we are qualified, our privileges are only vain and useless-titles.

But I hope there is no one so immersed in sensuality, so forgetful of his soul, as to think it more pleasant to satisfy the meanest appetites of depraved nature, than to act conformably to reason, and consult the interest of his nobler part.

The objects that minister pleasure to us, while we do our duty, are such as the holy angels cannot but delight in, and such as even God himself looks down upon with approbation.

And it ought to be matter of our daily thanksgiving, that we are endued with capacities fit for such glorious pleasures, and have so many opportunities of making ourselves happy.

Whilst we are engaged in the pursuit after virtue, our minds are enlarged, and our reason is continually improved. The image of God that is stamped upon us becomes more plain and lively; and when we behold the increasing resemblance, it is an earnest of that inconceivable increase of bliss that will flow in upon us, when we shall see our Creator face to face, and have the honour of copying after him to all eternity.

Every good action encourages us to delight in ourselves and to look with boldness upon that object, which is highly pleasing, when we dare to be acquainted with it; but equally dreadful when sin has rendered our own reflections disagreeable to us, and alienated us from ourselves.

When conscience and conscience condemn us, but anticipate the welcome sentence of our Judge, by giving us their applause, such beams of joy are darted into our hearts as can only proceed from him who is the *Fountain of* everlasting Light.

We then know that we are answering his important designs, doing as it becomes reasonable creatures, and have the concurrent testimony of all good

men, and even of those unhappy souls that cannot be persuaded to taste the pleasures of virtue, and will one day wish in vain, that they had lived the life, or could die the death of the righteous.

When we are filled with a just sense of our obligations to God, and endeavouring to make a grateful acknowledgment, his goodness presents itself to us, in such an endearing manner, that it inflames us with fervent devotion, and is the very soul and enlivening principle of our obedience. We are thence so far from thinking our duty too much for us, that we wish we could do infinitely more; that we had the swiftness of the morning light, since we cannot but rejoice *with the sun to run our course.*

How much more pleasant is this grateful sense of God's favour, than the impious satisfaction that degenerate men take in a prophane jest, and dishonouring the holy name of God!

When we have dealt fairly and impartially with our neighbour, and are assured that no one hath any cause to be our enemy, with what a cheertful confidence do we go forth into the world! Our way is plain and direct before us; we have but one design, which is to act honestly, and therefore it needs no arts to prevent discovery. We have not doubled and prevaricated in our actions, and there is no unlucky turning, where we are unable to meet an adversary, no flaw in our behaviour that requires fresh pretences to conceal it.

When we have taken away the sting of an injury, by preserving the peace of our minds, and by making good for evil, have made even the enemy itself relent, and blush at the enmity it bore to us, our mind rejoices in its noble conquest; and when we reflect upon the disorders of passion, and see the tempest quelled by the authority of reason, we cannot but compare our condition to that of the passenger, that has brought his treasures to the shores of safety, and looks back with comfort on the troubled sea. How far does this excel the imaginary pleasures of revenge that rack and torture, while they transport us, and are no more to be desired than the dreams of a man heated with a fever, while his reason is over-

turned, and he is so far deluded by his wild imagination, as to think himself safe and happy!

Charity, as it is the most godlike virtue, so it is the most agreeable to the dictates of our nature, and has always recommended itself to us by the name of humanity. It is indeed a duty we owe to our neighbour, but it is at the same time a relief to ourselves; for self-love, that darling principle, is still importuning us to be kind to the miserable; and whilst the object of our charity begs us to give an alms, for the sake of God our common Father, and in the name of Jesus our compassionate Redeemer, there is an advocate within us, pleading for him; and lest we should not regard the case of another person, it speaks to us in our own behalf, and intreats us to be merciful to to our own bowels.

And when we readily stretch forth our hand to assist the poor and needy, the seasonable refreshment that they receive from us returns into our bosom; their joy sparkles in our face, and our heart opens and expands itself, to make room for the full tide of pleasure that flows in upon it.

And now let the voluptuous man ransack all his stores; let him cover his table with an artful variety of studied meats, and indulge his appetite with every thing that his curious fancy can invent; and, in the height of all his luxury, he will not enjoy half the pleasure that arises from one kind and generous action: all his happiness will be flat and insipid, if compared with the transcendent delight that the good man finds within himself; when he that was ready to perish with hunger tastes of the grateful morsel that he deals forth to him; and is, as it were, recovered to life, by drinking a wholesome draught to allay his burning thirst.

How wonderful is thy goodness, O God, that hast made one man as a ministering angel to another!

How shall we ever sufficiently praise thee, O blessed Jesus, for inculcating the duty of charity, and injoining it in a special manner as thy commandment, since it renders both the giver and receiver inexpressibly happy, and makes us like to thee in bliss, when we study to be perfect, as thou art perfect!

Every virtue contributes to the pleasantness of the ways of religion; and were we truly sensible of the delight that results from each part of our duty, it would almost commence that exceeding great reward, that is laid up for the souls of just men made perfect.

We cannot better describe the pleasures of a good conscience, than by repeating the promises that the wise man made to his son: *Keep sound wisdom and discretion; so shall they be life to thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid; yea thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.* (Prov. iii. 21, 22, 23, 24.)

When the darkness of the night brings horror upon the wicked, the righteous lay themselves down in peace, and take their rest, knowing that the Lord will wake them to dwell in safety. They are assured, that he will stretch out the wings of his watchful providence, to be their covering, and give his angels charge over them, those affectionate spirits that rejoice in their charge.

And when they awake in the morning, their innocence gives them a cheerful countenance, and they look lively, as the heavens, when the sun has withdrawn the veil that was spread over them, and brought fresh life to the whole creation: or rather, they are like those glorious beings, which they shall be hereafter, when the trumpet shall call them forth to a blessed resurrection, and the sons of God shall shout for gladness at the sight of everlasting day.

And the pleasures of virtue are more delightful than the pleasures of sin, as they are pure and without alloy. The happiness that attends us in the performance of our duty, was intended for us, and suits with the capacities of our nature; it keeps the soul unspotted, and preserves the brightness of reason; and at the same time conduces to the welfare of the body, and the cheerfulness of the spirits: so that we neither offend our reason, nor offer any unnatural evidence to our senses, and fear neither the complaints of the one, nor the remonstrances of the other.

The delight that we take in it, is con-

stant and regular, without any sudden damp, or ungrateful interruption. For the soul is as happy as it can be in this present state, and so far admits the body into a participation with it, as to shed gladness and health upon it.

But when we so far debase ourselves, as to pursue after the pleasures of sin, we can have but a partial and imperfect enjoyment; for our superior faculties are oppressed and trampled on, because they will not join in the pursuit; our soul is perpetually grieving for the injury that is done to it; and the noise of sinful mirth serves only to silence the cries of our wounded conscience, as the dreadful harmony of war seems to still the shrieks and groans of the dying multitude in the day of battle. And when the sinner has strengthened himself, and imagines that he has subdued his heart; and shall no longer be reproached by it, even then his hopes fail him, and he trembles at his own fears. The hand-writing is still too plain; and even when the madness of his chosen companions is sounding in his ears, he suspects that they will not be able to guard him against himself, and that after all his industry to prevent reflection, he shall yet be found out by this his enemy.

And he that over-reaches and defrauds his neighbour, though he may admire his little cunning, and think how artfully he has imposed upon him, though he may greedily embrace the unjust gain, and delight to grasp the treasures of wickedness; yet he must necessarily loath his baseness, and look with a shy and jealous countenance, upon the blot that cleaves to him.

But the pleasures of religion are not only sincere and unmixed, but they are also more lasting than the pleasures of sin.

When the good man is going to do any virtuous action, his heart encourages him to it, and he is animated with such a delightful expectation, that he *panteth after it, as the hart panteth after the water brooks*. And in the act itself, he does not find his hopes disappointed; but his highest conceptions fall infinitely short of it; the satisfaction that he derives from it, is greater than the fairest

report had made it; for nothing but the enjoyment can give us a true sense of it; and after all the most engaging descriptions, the half of it is not told us.

And the pleasure is not transient; for a fund is laid in, to maintain a constant cheerfulness, and the remembrance of having done our duty, is a provision for a continual feast.

Reflection renews the agreeable impression; and the mind rejoices to look into itself, and behold the temple of the Holy Ghost, adorned with the beauty of holiness: and when it sees our conscience pure and undefiled, it speaks its admiration in the words of the Psalmist, *O how amiable is this thy dwelling, thou Lord of Hosts! Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are thy ways.* (Psal. lxxxiv. 1. 5.)

And whilst we are under this pleasing conviction, surely, we must say, *One day in thy courts, O God, is better than a thousand* (ver. 10.); or with the wise heathen, *One day lived according to the precepts of virtue, is to be preferred before an immortality of sin.*

The living waters that refresh us in the discharge of our duty, are kept in lasting cisterns, and they are never palled or polluted, but we have still a quicker relish of them, and they every day become more grateful to us, as we go on in the ways of religion. For the more we repeat its duties, so much the more they recommend themselves to us; and instead of growing unacceptable by repetition, they afford something new and surprising, and we like them better, as we are farther acquainted with them: for our faculties are improved by religion, instead of being impaired by frequent use. It is health to the soul, and as naturally conduces to its welfare, as exercise does to that of the body: and when our house of clay is hastening to its dissolution, the soul that has been habituated to virtue, is most active and vigorous; the virtues of a whole life then contribute to its reward, and this lasting treasure is translated with it, into another state, and is its sure possession in a blessed immortality.

But it is not thus with the ways of sin. Whilst unhappy man is in expectation of

its pleasures, his desires are like the unnatural thirst of a diseased body; his mind is in a ferment, and cannot be at rest till he has attained to the beloved object; and when he has gained this his point, he finds that his hope, restless as it was, was better than the enjoyment: for the sake of this indeed he thought, that the hours came on with too slow a pace, and kept his happiness at a distance. But when the desired hour comes, the pleasure forsakes him, almost as soon as he embraces it; and the time of enjoyment is but as a point, if compared with that which he wished away.

Before he has swallowed the luscious draught, he begins to take the gall and wormwood; and the treacherous serpent that invited him to drink of it stings him to death, while he fondly plays and twists himself about him.

And then his memory is so far from renewing the pleasure, that it brings his sin under a quite different appearance, and shews him his reason and conscience wounded with poisonous arrows.

And be the pleasure he is inclined to never so charming, yet it will not bear to be often repeated; he is soon convinced, that it cannot afford him variety of entertainment; and still meeting with but imperfect satisfaction, and with the same disappointments, he is weary of treading in the circle of sin; and though his lusts command him to go on, yet he sickens at the thoughts of it; and the sinful enjoyment weakens and overpowers his capacities, so that by often reaching after it, they destroy themselves.

How miserable then is the man that has rendered himself incapable of having a sense of those pleasures that he has chiefly sought after, and is so little acquainted with religion, that he cannot receive any relief from it!

How disagreeable a sight is he, when he has the will, but not the power of sinning, and endeavours to recover his lost appetite, and quicken it, with the sharpest juices? But his stomach rejects the loathsome burthen, and though he would fain bear a part in company, and run into the same excess of riot with them, yet he is compelled to own, that he is not able to keep pace with them.

But supposing, that his sin is not too hard for him, till the flower of life is fading away; yet the time will come, when he will want a support; and if he make this his staff to lean upon, it will pierce him through; for the pleasure that allured him to the commission of every act of sin, will then be passed away; and after he has seen, that all its enjoyments were but as a guest that tarrieth but a day, he will have all his sins heaping themselves upon him, to crush him, when he is already bowed down with infirmities: and each particular of his sad account will appear with fresh characters in his mind, when all other impressions are worn away; and will encrease the dreadful retinue of the king of terrors.

That we may be inclined to make a better provision against the evil day, I shall,

Secondly, Shew that the practice of religion keeps us in perpetual peace and safety, and supports us in the needful time, and brings us peace at the last. Religion preserves a settled tranquillity in the mind, and prevents disquieting fears, and the tumults of unruly passion. And when all is well within, it assures us, that we are in peace and safety abroad; for it engages the kindness of Providence, and gains the good-will of men. The world approves the man whom God delights to honour; and if any one should be so unreasonable, as to retain a prejudice against him, he knows that God will turn his heart, and *make even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Having an undoubted certainty, that he has done no man wrong, he is confident that every one will think favourably of him; or if it should happen otherwise, that his cause is so good, that it will soon justify itself. Thus secure from danger, he enjoys the ordinary pleasures of life, and every little occurrence makes some addition to his happiness. When he is walking abroad, the multitude of objects that are displayed before him, put him in mind of his great Creator; and the wonderful works of the heavens and the earth transport him with pious exultation. When he is sitting by himself, he is not without a friend and counsellor, that entertains him with variety of pleasures,

and renders the mirth of company superfluous to him: and when he enters into conversation, he has every thing that is valuable in it; and religion sheds its delightful beams upon the innocent liberty that he allows himself: for religion, like the light of the sun, adds a new beauty to every object that it shines upon, and the satisfaction that arises from it, makes every thing that is pleasant more exceedingly pleasing: and if he has a fair portion of the things of this world allotted to him, he can use them with complacency, because the poor are partakers with him; and he is satisfied that he cannot accuse himself, either for acquiring them unjustly, or abusing of them to the hurt of his own soul.

It is indeed a very powerful inducement to the practice of religion, that heightens every enjoyment, and improves our happiness in the days of our youth and prosperity. But the surest trial of its principles is in the hour of danger. Then we shall most especially perceive their never-failing support and effectual comforts. To have a citadel to retire to, where we shall be above the reach of an enemy, after he has done his utmost to straiten and distress us; this surely is an advantage to be sought for with the most ardent desires. And this is a case peculiar to religion. The rich man may fall from his most established greatness, or he may keep his possessions, and yet they will not be serviceable to him, when the most glittering shew will be too little to conceal a troubled mind; or when his pains will not be at all alleviated by the most expensive applications. But the sharpest misery that worldly evils can create, can never deprive us of the comforts of religion. Though the season is never so dark and gloomy, there will yet be light to the hearts of the righteous. Though every sinew is an instrument of torture, and diseases fill every vein, yet the mind can enjoy the peace of conscience, and collect all the most valuable satisfactions within itself.

When God is pleased to correct us in his fatherly kindness, and the good things that he gave us are taken away, then we shall rejoice, that we hold fast our integrity, and would not let it go. this will be as the angel from heaven, that stood

by our blessed Saviour, strengthening him in his agonies. And whatever interpretation the world may put upon our sufferings; how ready soever our pretended friends may be, to upbraid us, in our misery, with their censorious reproofs; yet these arrows will be unable to hurt us, if our heart does not reproach us, and we are not afraid to commit our cause to God. Then we shall stand on a sure foundation, and regard not the proud waves that roll against us, since we have a treasure which we cannot be bereaved of; which would still be above the power of the waters, were God to permit them once more to break down their appointed bounds; and which will shine like the fine gold, when the world shall melt away in a devouring fire, and all its glories return to dross and corruption. It is religion that will stand us in great stead, when our senses will be no longer capable of pleasure, and even the desire of all their objects will fail: when our friends with ineffectual wailing shall complain, that all their endeavours are in vain, this will give us relief and consolation. When every hour casts an additional weight upon us, this will bring the days of our youth to remembrance, and set them against the days of darkness: when the body turns for rest, and cannot find it, the mind will enjoy it by reflection; and when the portion of our time is almost run out, and every drop seems to be the last, this will make the time past our own: when we are taking our farewell of the world, this will cleave fast to us, with a faithful assurance that it will never fail nor forsake us. This will enable the soul and body to bear a short separation, since it fills us with a joyful hope that they will meet in glory: when our great enemy is trying his utmost efforts to discourage us into a surrender in our last hour, this will deliver us safe to a guard of angels; when our spirits are just sinking away, this will mingle its past pleasures and comforts, in one rich refreshing cordial: and when our eyes are almost covered with the night of death, our faith will look up to Heaven with the most piercing discernment, and our hope will grow into enjoyment.

O let us taste and see how good the

Lord is, and we shall never repent of the experiment; but every branch of our duty will open new scenes of pleasure, and the increase of knowledge will enlarge our happiness. Every advance that we make will bring us nearer to the prospect of the promised land; and when we are on the brink of the grave, we shall stand on the verge of a blessed eternity; and having viewed, through faith, the glorious mansions that are prepared for us, we shall contentedly lie down and die; for we cannot but be willing to depart into the regions of peace; and certainly we must desire to go hence, that our eyes may see this salvation.

Then we shall confess, that the merchandize of wisdom is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold: that she is more precious than rubies, and all the things we could desire were not to be compared unto her. For she has ages of bliss in her right-hand, and in her left-hand never-fading riches and honour. Her ways are ways of inexpressible pleasantness, and all her paths lead to everlasting peace.

SERMON CXXXIX

By GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Necessity of Good Works.

ST. JAMES II. 26.

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

TITUS III. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.

FROM the first rise of Christianity down to this present time, there has always existed a set of designing or deluded men, calling themselves Christians, who have maintained the doctrine of faith in opposition to that of good works; who have imagined, or pretended to imagine, that a belief in the life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, and in the miracu-

lous circumstances which accompanied each, would exempt them from the practice of the moral virtues, and leave them to the free indulgence of their lawless and unruly passions.

This doctrine of theirs they have grounded on certain selected passages of Scripture, which they have explained in such a manner, as to make them contradict all the rest of it. They tell us of the frequent and vehement assertions of St. Paul, "of justification by the free grace of God," and of "being saved by faith alone," and "by faith without the works of the law;" and these expressions they so interpret as to make them counteract the whole design of religion. Salvation, they say, is the free gift of God; it is not of debt but of grace; it is not bestowed in consequence of any actions of ours, but gratuitously given through God's boundless mercy; a lively faith in the merits of our Redeemer is alone requisite on our parts; what we do is out of the question; we have but firmly to believe, and we shall be entitled to an inheritance of life eternal.

I propose in this discourse to endeavour to overthrow this pernicious opinion, first, by explaining what learned men have in general agreed to be the real meaning of the passages which appear to make for it; secondly, by laying before you some strong and clear quotations from the Scriptures, in which the virtues of a good life are insisted on as indispensably necessary to salvation; and lastly, by proving from common sense and reason, the absurdity of expecting the favour of God and the rewards of Heaven on any other terms than by adding to sound faith good works.

And first, I will explain what learned men have, in general, agreed to be the real meaning of the passages which are brought in support of the opinion, that faith alone, unaccompanied by good works, is sufficient unto salvation.

It is very evident, that when St. Paul makes use of the words election, vocation, adoption, justification, and some others of the like tenor, he does not always apply them to the *final judgment*; that is, he does not always mean that those who are elected, called, adopted, or justified, have already obtained, or

shall certainly obtain, the kingdom of God. Recollect to whom his epistles were addressed, to those who had once been heathens, who had worshipped gods of wood and stone, or men frail and wicked as themselves, and who had no certain rule to live by, and scarce knew the difference between virtue and vice, but who had now embraced the Christian religion, had become acquainted with the knowledge, which *that* inculcated, and entitled to the rewards, which *that* held forth.

This acquisition of the laws, and this title to the blessings of the Gospel, thus bestowed on the heathens, the apostle calls their "being elected, adopted, justified;" and these privileges he affirms them to have obtained without previous good works, but merely by the free grace of God, on their only believing in the truth of the religion which he had sent down. Whenever then St. Paul talks of justification without works, he always means this first justification, men being made Christians; but this is a very different thing from final justification at the last day, to which holiness, virtue, good works, are indispensably necessary.

As to the expression of justification without the works of the law, it sometimes means without an observance of the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, which some early Christians insisted to be requisite; but, with respect to the moral part of that law, our Saviour and his apostles constantly declare that they do not come to destroy, but to fulfil it.

With these two keys I believe that every passage of Scripture, which seems to favour the idea of the sufficiency of faith alone to salvation, may be otherwise explained; and I leave to every candid person to determine whether that interpretation which makes a good book consistent with itself, is not to be preferred before that, which makes it at variance.

And this brings me to what I proposed in the second place, to lay before you some strong and clear quotations from the Scripture, in which the virtues of a good life are insisted on as indispensably necessary to salvation. And here so many passages, to this purpose, press

themselves upon me, that the only difficulty is to select and arrange them. The forerunner of our Saviour, John the Baptist, is described as opening the way for the Gospel, by preaching repentance and remission of sins; that is, by preaching that men should be forgiven on sorrow for past wickedness, and amendment in future. Our Saviour also began his ministry by preaching repentance: "from that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Or as St. Mark in the parallel passage expresses it, "the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel." Not only believing but forsaking of sin, and turning to a life of virtue, was required by him of his disciples. In his sermon on the mount, he particularly insists on the practice of a variety of good qualities, and in one verse commands us to be exemplary, and even conspicuous, in the exercise of them in general; "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." In the same excellent discourse he tells his hearers, that except their righteousness, that is, their practice of what is right, shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. And still more to my present purpose, he expressly declares, that not every one who shall say unto him, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only that doeth the will of his father; as if he had said, Not they, who only profess themselves to be Christians, and who believe and own me to be their master, but they who *do* what I teach shall obtain salvation. Nay, he goes still further, and tells them, that though they shall have even performed miracles in his name, yet if they have been disobedient to his will, and lived wickedly, he shall, at the great day of judgment, reply to their claims of acquaintance and favour, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

You remember the parable of the king, who made a marriage feast for his son; those who were invited, are distinguished into three sorts: first, those who were asked and did not come, by

which are meant, those who had the Gospel proposed to them, and did not embrace it: secondly, those who came, but had not on a wedding garment, those who had faith in Jesus, believing him to be the Christ, but were not new clad with a true repentance and amendment of life: thirdly, those who were invited, and had on the wedding garment; those who both believed the Gospel, and practised the precepts which it enjoins. Here you may observe, that belief without practice is equally condemned with unbelief: "Bind him," says the king, speaking of the guest without a wedding garment, "hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." They only were allowed to remain at the feast, to sit down in the kingdom of heaven, who both attended to the invitation of the king and came properly prepared; who both acknowledged Christ to be the Son of God, and followed that course of life which he pointed out. It is likewise very worthy of your notice, that in all the places where our Saviour speaks of the day of judgment, the sentence follows on *doing or not doing*, without any mention of *believing*. In the fifth chapter of St. John are these words, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear my voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." In the seventh chapter of St. Matthew, speaking of the same day, he says, "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." In the thirteenth, "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which *do* iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." And again in the sixteenth chapter: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

This you will find invariably to be the manner of proceeding in all the other places of Scripture where our Lord speaks of the last day; acceptance or condemnation are constantly annexed to

doing or not doing, without any notice of believing. Let me not, however, be misunderstood: I do not mean that faith in Christ is unnecessary; on the contrary, in those who have the Gospel proposed to them, it is absolutely necessary; but that faith which shews itself in a good life, is alone a faith unto salvation.

"What doth it profit a man (saith St. James) though he ~~says~~ he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith save him? Faith without works is dead, being alone: by works faith is made perfect. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." To conclude this head, it is evident beyond all dispute, from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, that purity of conduct, as well as firmness of belief, is absolutely essential to entitle us to a place in the mansions of the blessed. But lastly, even if the Scriptures had not spoken so expressly, the absurdity of expecting the favour of God, and the rewards of heaven, on any other terms than by adding to a sound faith, good works, is evident from common sense and reason. God, it is universally agreed, possesses in the most perfect degree the attributes of purity and holiness; is it then at all credible that a Being of this kind should send down, and reveal to his creatures, a religion which should let loose the reins to every corrupt passion, and authorise them in the indulgence of every evil inclination? which should hold forth to them the promise of eternal happiness, on the sole condition of yielding their assent to some few points of faith, but should leave them under the same slavish submission to their lusts in which it found them? It is not credible; every suggestion of sense and reason cries out against it. For consider whither such a position would carry us? Religion only aims to regulate our belief: very well; I firmly credit all which it requires of me, and on this ground I look for the rewards which it promises, let my practice be what it may; I will only take care not to subject myself to the punishment of human laws, and I will be as wicked as interest invites or impels me, fearless on this account of any after-reckoning in futurity. Am I avaricious? I will take every opportunity of defraud-

ing my neighbour of his property. Am I revengeful? neither the reputation nor the person of him who has accidentally injured me, or whose interest interferes with mine, shall be sacred from my attacks. Am I sensual? Let my friend beware of me; I will seduce from him the affections of his wife, or I will rob him of the innocence of his child; for so long as I am a *believer*, I can commit all these enormities unchecked or undisturbed by my conscience. Honour and honesty may here be alledged as restraints upon me; with some men I grant they would, but with far the majority they will be found feeble ties against the allurments of passion, supported by the hopes of impunity. You see then into what absurdities the idea of the sufficiency of faith without works leads; you perceive what a world this would be, if such a persuasion were universally prevalent.

Let us not then separate those two friends which agree so well together, religion and morality; let us not content ourselves with taking up the shield of faith, but let us put on, at the same time, the whole armour of righteousness; it is that alone which can empower us to withstand the assaults and be victorious over the malice of our grand adversary; it is that alone which can enable us to appear with decent confidence before the tribunal of our Judge and Saviour. They worship God best who resemble him most; let us then not only believe what he has revealed, but let us practice what he has commanded; let us endeavour to be like him in purity and goodness; let us conduct all which relates to ourselves with decency and propriety; all which concerns our fellow-creatures with justice and confidence: let us possess our own vessels with sanctification and honour, and do unto others, as we would they should do unto us.

SERMON CXL.

BY GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Necessity of Good Works.

ST. LUKE, xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

FAR the greater number of people appear to be in a middle state between virtue and vice; they are neither entirely good nor entirely wicked; whenever they think on the subject, they will own that there are such places as heaven and hell, and that they shall be rewarded or punished after their death, according as they shall have behaved themselves while they were in this world; but they shew sufficiently by their actions, that their belief is not firm and steady, otherwise they would not content themselves with seeking, with using some faint endeavours to gain the kingdom of heaven, but would strive, would exert all their might to acquire that invaluable prize.

I propose in this discourse, to point out to you, first, some of those persons who may be said to seek the kingdom of heaven, but who, only seeking it, shall not attain it: I propose, secondly, to shew what is meant by striving to gain the kingdom of heaven; and I propose, lastly, to bring forward the weighty motives by which we are urged to be amongst those who strive.

The first and lowest example, which I shall mention, of persons who seek the kingdom of heaven, is that of those who content themselves with desires and wishes only, who think at times, what a delightful circumstance it would be to enjoy everlasting happiness; and what a dreadful circumstance it would be, to be doomed to everlasting torments, and at those moments will call out, "Lord, Lord," but who will not deny themselves in any one instance, or stir one single step besides.

Can people of this description really expect that their wishes will be an-

swered? I am sure they cannot reason by what they see passing on earth. Will wishing for any thing that is valuable be sufficient to obtain it here? Will wishes clothe a man, will wishes feed him, will wishes enable him to provide for his family? Can I, by desiring it only, become learned, rich, or respectable? No! I must add to my desires, endeavours; I must exert myself; I must study or I must labour, and that not slightly, or now and then, but vigorously and without remission, or my desires will avail me nothing. And is it possible I can for a moment flatter myself, that when it requires so much pains to gain any earthly good, I shall be advanced to everlasting joys in heaven without any pains at all! The thing speaks for itself.

But perhaps people, who content themselves with desires only, buoy themselves up with some general notions of the goodness and mercy of God; that God is merciful, is certain, but he is likewise just; he forgives sins, but not merely because we wish it; it is necessary that we pray heartily for his forgiveness, that we are sincerely sorry that we have done amiss, that we resolve steadily to do so no more, and that we keep our resolutions: these are the terms, the only terms of acceptance, as he has repeatedly declared in the holy Scriptures. Both reason and Scripture therefore join to assure us, that they, who build their expectation of heaven merely on their wishes, build on no foundation.

A second description of persons that I shall notice, who may be said to seek the kingdom of heaven, are those whose endeavours are only exerted by fits and starts; who, on reading any good book, hearing any awakening discourse, or on having some serious thoughts suggested to them by God's holy spirit, are for a while religious and virtuous, but in time of temptation fall away; they are unable to resist the solicitations of vicious companions, or the enticements of desires, to which they have been used heretofore to yield; their righteousness is like the early cloud and the morning dew; it so soon passes away. It is indeed preferable to uninterrupted wickedness, because it gives ground to hope that it may by de-

grees become more steady; but in itself it is of no avail: he who possesses it, can only be said to seek, not to strive after the kingdom of heaven, and has therefore no grounds from Scripture to flatter himself with success. 'when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in it, all his righteousness shall be counted as nothing: for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die'

In the third set of persons, who come within the meaning of the text, of seeking and not striving, we may reckon those, who have discarded all their frailties and sins except one, and who flatter themselves that their good behaviour in all other particulars will atone for a single deficiency. But they will find themselves miserably deceived; either the kingdom of heaven is, or is not an object worthy of being contended for; if it is not, let drop all concern about it; let us eat, drink, and be merry; let us make ourselves as happy as we can in this world, without any thought of futurity; but if the kingdom of heaven be (as indeed it is) of the most consummate and inexpressible importance; if it be worthy that we should consider every earthly good as less than nothing in comparison of it, that alone surely ought to occupy our care and engross our affections; every thing else ought to yield to it, for it is very certain that one single preference of an earthly good, if habitually indulged, will take away all chance of attaining heaven. "Whoever shall keep the whole law (says St. James) and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," he is guilty of giving a preference to his lust in one particular instance over his duty, of setting an higher esteem upon things present than things future, and therefore he must expect to reap the fruits of his absurdity in being deprived of that reward to which his conduct in other respects, were it not for this one deficiency, would entitle him. I have heard of a person contending in a race for a prize of vast importance, who was prevented from winning it, by turning out of the way to pick up some golden balls, which were from time to time thrown down by the competitor for that purpose; precisely similar is the folly of

these persons who suffer themselves to be diverted from attaining the glorious prize of heaven, by the riches, honours, or pleasures of this world, which the adversary of our souls is ever taking occasion to display before us.

Having given you these instances of persons who only seek to gain the kingdom of heaven, and who will therefore fail of the prize, I shall now lay before you the character and conduct of one who strives, and who striving will be sure to obtain. Such an one, in the first place, does not content himself with bare wishes, as he well knows that he may profess *them* in common with the most abandoned of mankind; for, however profligate a man may chuse to be in this world, he would certainly desire rather to be happy than miserable in the next; though he may prefer the pleasures of vice, he would clearly wish for the rewards of virtue; though he cannot prevail on himself to live the life of the righteous, he would indubitably be rejoiced to die his death. One who is in earnest then with respect to obtaining heaven, knows that to wish for it alone would be of no service to him. Another thing also, of which he is sensible, is, that to be devout by fits and starts only, will not answer his purpose; his exertions to please God (which can only be done by piety towards him, kindness towards men, and by temperance, sobriety, and chastity, in his own conduct) must be constant and unremitted; he does not then put on these virtues only at particular times, and on particular occasions, but makes them habitual to him; he renders himself so completely master of them, that they pervade, they make a part of his whole behaviour: another particular also, which he knows to be necessary, and therefore strives to attain is, not merely to be obedient to a part of God's commands, but, to them all; he knows, that though the Almighty will take up with our imperfect obedience, if our endeavours are sincere, yet that he will by no means suffer us to live in the willing breach of any one of his commands. Life and death, God and the world, are before us; we must make our choice between them; if we are resolved to indulge ourselves in any one known sin, we plainly shew that

there is something which we prefer to God, and we must take the consequences of our folly. He who strives to obtain the kingdom of heaven, may, and probably will, sometimes fall, but he must not fall willingly; he must exert himself against temptation; he must recover himself as soon as possible; he must be grieved and humbled by his frailty; and he must use every effort to keep himself more steady for the time to come. The man who strives for the kingdom of heaven will, besides, never think that he is good enough; he will be still aspiring at higher degrees of perfection. Let it not be thought, by the command which is laid upon us to strive after the kingdom of heaven, that it is meant that we should pay no regard to the concerns of this world; on the contrary, God expects from us a diligent performance of our duties towards each other, as well as of our duty to him: now this cannot be done without an attention to worldly concerns. How shall a father provide for his family without applying to his particular profession, or working at his particular calling? How shall the greater part of mankind get even a subsistence, if they do not exert themselves in some kind, either of study or labour? without this, they must, generally speaking, either starve, or be a burthen upon their neighbours. How is the earth to be cultivated and its fruits produced, if it were unlawful to attend at all to worldly business, and what would become of the human race if this were neglected? Besides, the dangers of idleness are great, and it is impossible that the immediate duties of religion can take up our whole time; it is therefore as clearly a part of our duty to follow some honest method of getting a livelihood, and to follow it with diligence, as it is the first part to pray to, to praise, and to offer up our thanks to God.

But it is time for me to pass to the third thing I proposed, which is, to shew the weighty motives by which we are urged to be in the number of those that strive. To this a few words will be sufficient.

These motives are no less than the good or bad condition in which we shall be, from the time that we die, to all

eternity, according as we are among this number, or are not.

The hour is coming, in the which all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, that is, they who have strove to gain heaven, unto the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil, that is, they who have not strove, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Let us frequently dwell upon this magnificent and awful spectacle; let us represent to our minds the alarming trumpet of the archangel, by which we shall be awakened from our graves, and the summons which we shall receive to stand before the judgment seat of Christ: let us suppose him seated on a lofty throne, surrounded by myriads of angels, and clothed with that splendour and majesty with which he was seen by Peter, James, and John, at his transfiguration, and again by those chosen disciples, who were present at his ascension into heaven: let us think of the grand scene of all the nations of the earth gathered before him, and the tremendous decision about to take place, as to the final and everlasting condition of each individual. Let me appeal to your consciences; what hopes do they give you? I address myself to every one of you here present: Has thy conduct been such as to entitle thee to look for that transporting sentence, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Or hast thou not reason to apprehend the sound of these words (of all that can be uttered, the most dreadful) "Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" If thou shrinkest with terror at this inquisition; if thou canst not bear thus to have thy conscience probed; if thou buoyest up thyself with some such consolation as this, "though my hopes are nothing now, I intend to repent and live better before I die," alas! how miserably dost thou deceive thyself! Attend to what I tell thee; almost all the wicked, who have gone before thee, comforted themselves in the same false manner, but they never thought the hour of reformation arrived; they were still for delaying it yet a little while longer,

and were finally cut off with all their imperfections on their head. What gross folly is this! How soon does this world pass away, and how quickly does even the very remembrance of us perish; whereas to that which is to come there is no end! Let us think of these things; let us recollect that the kingdom of God is not to be got by seeking only; and when we remember of what infinite importance it is to us not to come short of it, let us resolve, and let us be steady to our resolutions, to be in the number of those who strive.

SERMON CLXI.

By GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On Sins of Omission.

ST. MATTHEW, XXV. 30.

Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

IN that form of confession, which is with great propriety placed at the beginning of our church service, we not only acknowledge that we have done what we ought not to have done, but that we have left undone what we ought to have done. The guilt of a Christian is made up of omissions as well as transgressions of his duty, and perhaps the former, with men in general, may have the greater share in drawing on them God's displeasure.—It is certain that this is the case with one very large class, who are commonly distinguished by the name of good sort of people: persons of this description are guilty of no flagrant violations of the laws of God: they are, as far as complying with external forms, religious and devout, they attend regularly at church, they perhaps say their prayers morning and evening, they are neither profane nor debauched, they pay to every one their due; and yet, if this is all that can be said for them, they are very far removed from the kingdom of heaven.

The promises of the Gospel are not dealt out to negative virtues; Christianity

requires from its votaries a continued series of positive acts of goodness. In vain shall we plead that we have done no harm, if we are not entitled to say that we have done good; we were not sent into the world to live in idleness, and to go out of it in the same state in which we entered into it: it is expected from us that we make ourselves better, that we lay out all the endowments of nature and of fortune to the best advantage, that we acquire habits of holiness and benevolence, which may fit us for that blessed society, to which on our so doing we may hope to be preferred.

The dangers which arise to us from omissions of our duties are by so much the greater, because in many cases they are incurred without our being sensible of them, and because in almost all they are not afterwards remembered.

If I commit a positive sin, if I swear, if I am guilty of a falsehood, if I defraud or bear false witness against my neighbour, I know what I am doing at the time, my guilt makes an impression on me, my crime assumes a body and a shape, I do not easily forget it, and consequently I may repent of it, and avoid being guilty of the like in future.

But when I am only negatively criminal, when I merely omit to perform either my public or private devotions to the Almighty, or perform them with carelessness and inattention, when I go on from day to day neglecting to improve my understanding, or to render my heart more enlarged, when I take no advantage of the many opportunities which are presented to me of being useful to my fellow-creatures, when I make no progress in the attainment of holiness, and in weaning my affections from the things of this world, my offences, having no immediate tendency to cause inconvenience to myself, or do injury to my neighbour, make no lasting impression on my mind; they are consequently repeated, not merely without regret, but frequently without notice, and are very soon entirely forgotten.

Notwithstanding this, they must certainly be accounted for:—what the world frequently calls a good sort of person, that is, one who neither does harm nor good, who is regular and decent in his

conduct, and takes care to do nothing that would bring him under the lash of the law, or subject him to any violent censure from his neighbours, whose piety goes no further than ceremonials, and whose benevolence extends not beyond good wishes; such an one is represented by our Saviour under the character of the servant who hid his talent in a napkin.—This servant neither dissipated what was entrusted to him in extravagance, nor lost it by carelessness, but he neglected to improve it! he did no harm, 'tis true, but he did no good; and therefore the sentence pronounced against him was, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The admonitions and threats of the Gospel are chiefly directed against people of this class: the denunciations of our Saviour are more frequently pointed at the lamp which had no oil, the tree which bore no fruit, and the talent which was not improved, than at bad oil, corrupt fruits, and talents ill-employed.—On the latter, I suppose, as being more self-evident, it was not so necessary to insist. Flagrant violations of God's commandments speak for themselves; those who are guilty of them cannot but know their criminality, and the dangers which they incur; but it was an instance of our Lord's paternal care to awaken from their slothful dreams, to rouse from their imagined security, those who, resting satisfied with negative virtue, flattered themselves that they might attain heaven and happiness, so long as they did no harm.

Turn to the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, and you will see there clearly set forth throughout, on what sandy foundations all hopes of God's favour are raised on our merely not being wicked.—It begins with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the former of whom were admitted to the marriage feast, because they had oil in their lamps properly prepared to meet the bridegroom, and the latter excluded because they had no oil. It is not said that their oil was bad, that they were *wicked* virgins, but merely that they had no oil, that they were slothful and improvident, and had been slumbering in indolence during the whole time in which they ought to have been exerting

themselves :—" when the door was shut, these virgins came, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, but he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

The next parable, which immediately follows, is still more in point. I have already touched on it.—Our Saviour likens himself and his dealings with mankind, to a man, who departing into a distant country, delivered to his servants different sums of money to trade with; on his return, summoning them to render up their accounts, he finds two of them had been provident and industrious, having greatly improved what had been entrusted to them, and they accordingly receive his commendations and rewards in proportion to their different merits; but the third having made no advantage of his trust, but merely wrapt it in a napkin, meets with the severest reproofs, and is ordered to be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The conclusion of the chapter is a sort of application of the parable. It is the remarkable account which our Saviour gives of the day of judgment.—He represents himself as sitting upon the throne of his glory with all his holy angels around him, and dividing mankind into two bodies, the virtuous and the wicked, inviting the former to take possession of their reward, to sit down with him in his kingdom, and banishing the latter from his presence and dooming them to everlasting fire :—that however his justice may be manifest, he briefly runs over the principal merits and demerits, which will determine him in this distribution.

To the virtuous he says, "The rewards which I bestow on you, are obtained by your many kindnesses to your brethren; when they were hungry, ye fed them; when they were thirsty, ye gave them drink; when they were naked, ye clothed them; when they were strangers, ye hospitably received them; when they were sick and in prison, ye were attentive and ministered to them in their necessities."—From this we see, that *active benevolence* is the merit which is attributed to those whom our Saviour receives into his kingdom. It was not because they did not injure their fellow-

creatures, but because they *exercised* themselves to be of service to them, that they are rewarded with bliss and immortality.

On the other hand, the wicked are condemned to everlasting torments for the omission of those very acts of benevolence, for having done which, the righteous are rewarded with eternal happiness: they are not in the sentence passed on them charged with having killed, defrauded, or in any shape oppressed their brethren, but merely with having done them no services. This alone is looked upon as sufficient to exclude them from the presence of God, and deprive them of the enjoyments of heaven.

Nor indeed could we in reason expect it to be otherwise. No human accomplishment, no human possession (to speak in general) is attained without pains and labour; sitting still in indolence, and merely doing nothing to *counteract* their attainment, is not sufficient; we must be assiduously attentive and actively industrious, if we would wish to succeed. Surely then we cannot imagine that immortality of bliss, bliss such as we can here have no conception of, is to be procured without any efforts, when it requires the greatest to attain even the paltry acquisitions of this world.

I shall conclude with beseeching you, that none of you, because ye think ye can do but little, will for that reason imagine, that it is unnecessary to do any thing. Ye read that of those to whom much is given, much will be required; but can ye suppose that of him, to whom little is given, there will be required nothing? Far from it. Expectations are formed of us in proportion to our endowments. He, who had only two talents, was not expected to gain five;—yea find his reward was allotted him for gaining two, that is, for doing what his abilities permitted him. In the same manner he who had only one talent, was not expected to gain as much as his fellow-servants, who had more; nor was he punished for not having done as much as they; but he was punished for having done nothing, for having made no advantage at all of what was entrusted to him.

Let this truth then be deeply engraven on your remembrance, that all men have it in their power to do something for the glory of God, and for the good of their fellow-creatures; and that it is not by the doing no harm, by sitting still in indolence, and fancying that we can do nothing, but by an active exertion of our respective abilities, that we can alone deserve and obtain that transporting sentence, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON CXLII.

BY GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Impropriety of deserting Worldly Duties.

[Preached in Lent.]

ST. MATTHEW xiii. 23.

These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

It has been the great aim of infidelity in all ages to persuade the credulous and unwary, that religion and present interest are incompatible; that we cannot at the same time apply ourselves to our callings here and secure our happiness hereafter, but that we must of necessity sacrifice either this world or the next. Those who have been deceived by this misrepresentation have, according to their different tempers, chosen two opposite modes of conduct, both very far, though not equally distant, from that which sound reason points out.

They on whose minds the goodness of God in their creation and redemption, and the immensity of the rewards and punishments held forth in futurity obtained that weight, which in wisdom they ought to obtain, have given up all commerce with this world whatever, have betaken themselves entirely to the exercises of piety, have fled to deserts and to cells, and in the ardour of performing their duty towards God, have entirely neglected that which is due from them to their neighbour.

They, on the contrary, whose warmer passions, or whose less enlarged understanding, chained them down to what was immediately before them, who preferred what was present and visible, to what was invisible and distant, have thought it the most agreeable, if not the most wise, to listen to the solicitations of their senses, and to seize the gratifications which were at hand; they have conducted themselves as if there were no God, no account taken of human actions, no judgment after death, no heaven, no hell, but that this present life was the whole of their existence.

Both these descriptions of men have. I observed, proceeded on a persuasion that their temporal and eternal interests were at variance; that the one or the other must of necessity be surrendered, and that there was no middle course by which they were reconcilable.

I shall in this discourse endeavour to point out the falsity and pernicious tendency of this error; I shall point out its falsity by shewing that a man may work out his salvation at the same time that he attends to his earthly concerns; and I shall expose its pernicious tendency, by proving, that to withdraw ourselves entirely from worldly business is not only unnecessary, but criminal; that religion does not only not command such a desertion, but actually forbids it.

First, then, I am to shew that a man may work out his salvation at the same time that he attends to his earthly concerns.

Those who maintain the contrary, ground probably their opinion on the following precepts of our Saviour, and other of the like import. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Here, say they, our Saviour seems to forbid all care, even about the necessities of life, meat, drink, and clothing; much more about the conveniences and delights of it. In the same chapter, he says, "Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them;" again, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin." Here it seems to be inti-

ated that we ought to depend on the providence of God for food and raiment, and to use no more industry for obtaining them than the fowls or the lilies do. There are various other texts of this kind, all of which there are two ways of explaining, and either is sufficient to overturn the conclusion drawn from them, that worldly employments and religion are incompatible. One explanation is, that our Saviour does not mean to condemn all care whatever about the things of this life, but only that sort of care which is accompanied with anxiety and distrust; that he does not intend to decry every kind of diligence and industry with regard to our earthly concerns, but only such degrees of them as would take off, or too much withdraw, our attention from the duties of religion. The other explanation which is most probably the true one, is, that these commands were not designed to be general and standing laws, but were only addressed to, and intended for the practice of the first disciples; for it was necessary that they should always be attendant on our Saviour to be witnesses of his miracles, and hearers of his doctrines; and in those in particular who were to preach the Gospel after his resurrection, a peculiar degree of contempt of the world, and disinterestedness, was requisite; since they must of course quit their homes, give up what prospects they had of advancing their fortunes, and expose themselves to persecutions and deaths of every kind.

An entire freedom from care and concern with regard to temporal comforts was absolutely requisite in these; but that it is not so in all men, is very evident from various passages in the Gospel. When the forerunner of our Saviour, John the Baptist, was asked by the publicans and soldiers what they should do, what conduct he would prescribe to them to fit them for the coming of the Messiah; to the former he says, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" to the latter, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." No mention, you see, of relinquishing their professions, which there certainly would have been had it been necessary, for John was sent for the express purpose of preparing the

way for the preaching of the Gospel. Nor is the counsel of Christ himself on a similar occasion different: on his being asked by a certain lawyer what he should do to inherit eternal life? he replies unto him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" And the lawyer answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." And Jesus said unto him, "thou hast answered right, this do, and thou shalt live." No injunction, you see, to forsake the world, or to give up his business; nor is such meaning fairly to be drawn from any other of our Lord's discourses.

His advice to the rich young man to sell all that he had, and to give to the poor, is certainly much overstrained by those who would suppose it binding on Christians in general; it was probably meant as a trial of the sincerity of the person to whom it was addressed, and certainly extends not beyond them to whom our Lord may have directly enjoined it. It seems to be intimated, indeed, though even this has been otherwise explained, that many of the first converts to Christianity parted with all that they had, laid the money at the apostles' feet, and lived together on a common stock; but it is probable that they still continued to employ themselves in their several trades and professions. Nor was there any obligation upon them to this communion of goods, as St. Peter expressly asserts in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; nay, among those, who were first called, there are several instances to the contrary, instances of opulent persons and in high civil and military employments, who neither divested themselves of their riches, nor forsook their occupations. They are charged indeed, to be ready to give, and willing to communicate, which they doubtless were; but neither did they look on themselves as bound, nor did the apostle require of them, when they adopted the character of Christians, to desert their duty as men. Christianity with respect to the civil relations of men to each other, and their secular employments, seems to have left the world entirely as she found it; she in-
 indeed on a faithful discharge of ~~the~~ ^{her} ~~to per-~~

sons new appellations, on their being adopted into new families; in like manner, we, on being made members of Christ's family, received a Christian name, which denotes our relationship to him; this name, therefore, is very aptly asked of us, when we are going to be questioned further as to the privileges which are conferred on us by baptism. These are said to be three:—we were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; in other words, we are admitted into the society of Christ's disciples, we become one of that body of which he is the head, we gain a title to the mercy of God, and are put in a capacity of obtaining a blessed immortality after death.

Of the engagements which our god-fathers and god-mothers are said to enter into for us, the first promises that we should forsake all kinds of sin whatever (the world, the flesh, and the devil, being a phrase to that import); the second, that we should believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and the third, that we should obey God's holy will; which we may in a great measure, though not perhaps entirely, learn from the commandments.—Now there is certainly nothing improper in our sponsors making these vows for us, and we are indisputably bound to observe them; and, for the same plain reason, they are so greatly for our own good; for, by the transgression or neglect of them, we shall draw on ourselves God's indignation, and be everlastingly punished in the life to come.

I am now to consider the apostles' creed, as it is called, all the articles of which my god-fathers and god-mothers promised I should believe. The first article requires my assent to this truth—that there is an Almighty God, the Father, and maker of heaven and earth; this is evident from the existence of myself and every thing around me, from the order and regularity with which the universe is conducted, and from the common consent and universal agreement of all mankind. Who makes the sun to rise and to set, the moon and the planets to perform their stated rounds, the seasons to return at regular periods, the

grain, which is buried in the earth, uniformly to revive and to grow, and some mighty superintending power, which is God? We are next called on to believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. Of the truth of all this, we have the clearest testimony:—about eighteen hundred years ago, a great personage, called Jesus Christ, was born of a pure virgin, among the Jews; he declared that he was sent from God, and that he was God's only Son; and he confirmed the truth of those declarations by the wisdom of his instructions, and by the many wonderful works which he performed. The Jews, through envy and malice, and fearing that the religion which he taught was to be erected on the ruin of theirs, falsely accused and crucified him, at the time Pontius Pilate was their governor, on the day which we now keep and call Good Friday; and, when they perceived that he was dead, he was taken from the cross and buried in a new sepulchre; a large stone was rolled at the mouth of it, and a guard of armed soldiers placed before it, lest his disciples should come in the night and steal him away.

The creed next asserts that—"he descended into hell."—Whatever is meant by this, I think we may be certain that it is not the place of torment which usually goes by that name; it possibly means that place where the souls of the dead reside during their separation from the body, between the times of death and judgment; but this I do not think material for us to inquire into; what follows is, indeed, important—"that he arose again the third day;" because it is an earnest that we also shall in like manner be raised from the grave, and live. That it was really himself, and not an apparition which deceived them, he clearly proved, by condescendingly permitting his disciples to handle him, and by eating and drinking as he had done before his death; he remained on earth and shewed himself to large numbers during forty days. The story of his body being stolen by his disciples (which the Jews pretended) is too improbable to gain credit

was a person of sense and candour. He died then, and was buried on the Friday, and rose again on the day which we now celebrate as Easter Sunday. "He ascended into heaven:" this he did to the sight of many of his followers, after having conversed with them, as I have just observed, during forty days, and given them a commission to preach the gospel to every creature.

He now sits at the right hand of God, the place of highest honour in heaven, where he continually presents our prayers, and makes intercession for us, and ere he shall come in great pomp and majesty, surrounded by myriads of angels, to recompense according to their deeds, both the multitudes which during all the ages of the world have died, and those whom at his coming he shall find alive. The creed next calls on us to "believe in the Holy Ghost," who is the third person in the blessed Trinity, by whose inspiration the prophets spake, and the apostles did miracles; who is the author of all the good thoughts which arise in our minds, who sanctifies and makes holy all righteous persons.

But let me caution you against imagining that his divine being will take up his abode with you, without any efforts on your parts: you may indeed be sure, if you earnestly pray for his assistance, and sincerely endeavour to deserve it, that it will not be withheld from you; but then your own labours must be as strenuously exerted, as if all depended (as in fact it does) on yourselves. We next declare our belief "in the holy catholic church, and the communion of saints;" it is not perhaps very clear, now, what is precisely meant by these, but probably they may be best explained together in this manner,—we believe that the true church of Christ is made up of all sincere Christians, of what nation or sect soever, and that all such are and shall be partakers of the benefits and privileges of the Gospel.

The next article in the belief, to which we are called on to give our assent, is, "the forgiveness of sins." Before Jesus Christ came into the world, men had certainly some hope of their offences being pardoned, which arose probably from the general goodness of God, from his

delay of punishment, and from the tendency in human nature to expect what we greatly wish; but this hope by no means amounted to that full assurance of pardon, which was necessary to make the considerate in any degree easy under the sense of their sins, and to inspire them with ardour in the work of their reformation. Jesus Christ at length came preaching repentance and remission of sins; which I understand to mean, that if at any time of a man's life he is sincerely sorry that he has offended God, most heartily prays to be forgiven, and resolves steadily to be guilty no more, but to be religious and virtuous in future; and if he adheres to his resolutions, notwithstanding all his former transgressions, he will meet not only with mercy but with favour. This is a grand privilege; but let no one be tempted to abuse it; let no one sin in expectation, and, as he thinks, with intention, of amendment; of all difficult things to break through, bad habits are the most difficult. On account of his presumption, likewise, God may hereafter refuse him assistance, and then all his own endeavours will avail nothing; besides, no one can be certain that he shall live another day, and if he dies in his sins, he knows the consequence; let us not, therefore, trust to futurity, but do what we know to be so necessary immediately. Great is the salvation which is offered us; how shall we escape, if we neglect it!

Now follows our profession that we believe in "the resurrection of the body."—Of the truth of this the Scriptures expressly inform us; at the last day our bodies will be raised from the grave, at the sound of the trump of the archangel, they will be united again with our souls, and we shall live. If you ask me how it is possible that the flesh, part of which has been eaten by worms, part blown about in dust by the four winds, that of some men consumed by fire, and of others buried in the ocean; if you ask me how it is possible that all these scattered fragments and particles can be collected and joined together,—I ask you, in return, whether it be not as easy for God to do this as it was for him to form man from the dust at his first creation? To revive a dead man appears to

require no greater exertion of power than originally to have made him. You may form some idea of the possibility of our being revived again, by what you experience every year:—"That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die;" the grain you place in the earth first rots, and is afterwards enlivened, and arises clothed with a beautiful verdure. And if God so clothe the grass of the field, how much more shall he clothe your mortal bodies with a glorious immortality!—It seems probable that men will be first revived in the same bodies in which they died, but that an instant change will take place:—"This corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality:"—Christ gave a specimen of the nature of the change our bodies are to undergo, to Peter, James, and John, when he was transfigured on the mount; he appeared all glorious, his face shone like the sun, and his raiment became white as snow. Such a change will take place with respect to the righteous at the resurrection; for St. Paul tells us, that "Christ will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." You will observe, that when this glorious change in the bodies of men at the resurrection is spoken of, it can only be meant of the bodies of the virtuous, although it be mentioned in general terms, St. Paul being desirous of taking for granted, that all those to whom he writes would be in that number. The bodies of the wicked will certainly be raised at the same time, but whether they will undergo any change, is uncertain; but it seems probable, that as many of the crimes of the wicked have arisen from their bodies, that they shall, together with their souls, share in the eternity of punishment which has been denounced.

The last article in the creed is our profession of belief, in "the life everlasting."—Life is often put in Scripture for happiness, and it is possible may mean so here. I believe, that if I am pious and virtuous in this world, I shall be for ever happy in the next; or probably it may have a more extensive signification, that of existence, and may mean, not only the everlasting bliss of the righteous, but the everlasting misery of the wicked: in

either case our belief is supported by Scripture, which assures, in various places, that as the religious and good man shall be eternally happy in the presence of God, so the profane and immoral man shall for the same endless time, undergo the most terrible disgrace and torment. Such are the great truths to which we are called on to give our assent; it is, however, to little purpose that we obey the call, unless we join to a sound faith, a good life and conversation: what this chiefly consists in we may learn from the commandments, to which I should now pass; but this I must defer to future opportunity.

SERMON CXLIV.

By GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Catechism.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IN the former part of the 19th chapter of Exodus, are related the orders which the children of Israel received to attend the Lord upon Mount Sinai, and the solemn preparations which they were directed to make for that awful meeting. After that the historian proceeds in this manner:—"And it came to pass on the third day (the day appointed for God's descent) in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and thick clouds upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the bottom of the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole Mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."—Moses then receives orders to charge the people not to presume to ascend the Mount: and after that, God delivered the ten com-

mandments, as we find them in the 20th chapter. You observe that this delivery was originally made to the people of Israel, and undoubtedly the ten commandments were chiefly intended for their use. "I am the Lord thy God (says the Almighty) which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This is applicable to them only, and relates to their miraculous escape from the oppression of Pharaoh.— But when we consider the prodigious solemnity with which these ten commandments were uttered by God's own mouth, and that they were afterwards written with his own finger; and when we reflect, besides, on their intrinsic excellency, that they contain in them the great heads of duty both towards God and man; and when we observe the veneration which Christians of all ages have paid to them, we cannot but perceive that they are deserving of all our attention, respect, and obedience.

The first commandment is directed against those numerous objects of worship, to which the nations, who lived in and round about the country which the Jews were going to inhabit, paid their ignorant and wicked adorations; the sun, the moon, the stars, stocks, stones, animals, and deceased men, they either joined with the Supreme Being, or worshipped instead of him. To keep the people of Israel from this absurdity and wickedness, God says to them, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."— I allow neither of substitute nor partner, to me only shall you offer up your prayers, praises, and adorations. We Christians are, I hope, in no danger of offending against this law, in the same manner as the nations above mentioned, but we may break it in other instances, and incur no small portion of guilt for so doing. We may, and alas! too many of us do, give a preference to the pleasures, honours, riches of this world, above God: now when we do this they are to us in the place of gods; it is them which we love with all our hearts, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength; it is them which we worship; it is in them that we trust; and too often it is them which we truly serve all the days of our life. Now, when this is the

case, we certainly violate the first commandment; those who dedicate their whole time, and set their whole affections either on worldly honours or pleasures, are (as the apostle expressly tells us, with respect to the covetous Idolaters. "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." The precept is delivered in negative terms, but it has a positive meaning; we are *not* only required by it *not* to worship what is *not* God, but we are required heartily to worship what is God.

As Protestants we are, I trust, in little danger of infringing the prohibition contained in the second commandment; but there is one sect of Christians, the Roman Catholics, who appear to infringe it grievously; they certainly make to themselves images, and bow down before them. Some parts, however, of this commandment deserve our notice: God says—"I am a jealous God;" i. e. 'I am very tender of my honour; I bear neither partner nor competitor in those duties which properly belong to me.' This jealousy does not only imply a strong dislike, but a fierce displeasure against the breakers of this law: what reason, then, is there to guard against it? "Who can stand in God's sight when he is angry?" Who can support the effects of his displeasure?

The conclusion of this commandment is remarkable: God represents himself as "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and shewing mercy unto thousands in them that love him and keep his commandments." Men have usually a great affection for their posterity, and a great anxiety about them, and therefore, the more to deter them from gross sins, God affirms here that he will not confine his rewards and punishments to the good man or sinner himself, but extend them likewise to his descendants. This seems particular, perhaps, and almost unaccountable, but yet in fact it is what is constantly happening. Do we not every day see children, and even children's children, enjoying the rewards of their ancestors' prudence and virtue, or suffering grievously in consequence of their ancestors' crimes? This, in fact, is against the course of nature; but remember—
the course of nature is v. of impurity—

tion of God. Observe, however, the difference between God's proceeding in the way of severity and in the way of favour! He only threatens to visit the iniquities of disobedient parents on the third and fourth generation of their children, but sheweth mercy unto a thousand descents of the posterity of them who love and obey him.

The third commandment forbids us to take God's name in vain; that is, never to mention it but on serious occasions:—"The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain;"—a strong expression, which implies, that he will look on him as exceedingly guilty. This commandment certainly extends to all kinds of swearing and cursing whatever. And here I must express my wonder that there are so many men, who incur such great portions of guilt on such slight temptations! When the robber tells you he was induced to take away his neighbour's goods, to furnish himself with the necessaries or luxuries of life,—when the drunkard alleges, in excuse for his failing, the delight which he finds in intemperance and jollity,—though their wickedness is great, we are able to form an idea of the motive which incites them to it; but what can we assign as a motive to the common swearer? He cannot hope to make himself richer by swearing, nor wiser, nor more esteemed; it will gratify none of his appetites or passions: there is no wit in it, nor is there any invention; for the most stupid may arrive at the same degree of perfection in it as the most ingenious. It is shocking to every pious ear, and disgusting to every liberal mind: and though they who practise it are guilty of dreadful wickedness, I know no one end that it can possibly answer to them. The pretence that what they say is more attended to on this account, is too ridiculous to deserve a serious reply; besides, if it were true, I beg you to reflect, whether such attention would be worth purchasing at the expense of your eternal salvation.

The fourth commandment enjoins the happy observance of the Sabbath; all kinds of labour were prohibited to the Jews on of existing. We are not so strictly bound, everlasting we may attend, as occasion demands of absolute necessity: let us, abuse this Christian li-

berty, by carrying it too far; let the hours of divine service in particular be esteemed sacred; and let us, from charity and humanity, as well as reverence to God's laws, grant every reasonable and possible remission from their labours to those who depend upon us. The poorer part of mankind, forced to incessant and interrupted toil, to procure themselves the necessities of life, have little time, during six days in the week, for the consideration of religious subjects; and if they perform their morning and their evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, it is all, perhaps, which they are able to do; but on Sunday, if they be not prevented by hard or inconsiderate masters, they have opportunity as well as leisure to think of another world; to assemble themselves together with their brethren to worship their God, and to be instructed in their duty, and reminded of a day of judgment and a world to come.—Permit me to call on those who have dependants under them, to do all in their power to render this excellent institution of the Sabbath effective and useful; not only to free as much as possible, from their usual employments, those who live under the same roof with them, but to make those arrangements and settlements, with all who depend upon them, before the Lord's Day, which, when they are delayed till then, are gladly seized by the idle as an excuse for not attending public worship; while they are sincerely lamented by the well-disposed, as the real cause of their absence. The accounts of the poor are soon settled, the recompence of their labours for the week past is not long in adjusting. Let not then vexatiously be delayed; nor occupy with earthly cares those hours which ought to be solely devoted to God. Consider the inestimable importance, to the poor, of Sunday well-employed; consider that the certain consequence of their time being taken up, on that day, with earthly cares, must be total irreligion. Reflect how shocked you will be, and how heavy will be your account, if any of your dependants should plead at the last audit—"But for my master's inconsideration I should have been regular at church, should have worshipped my God, and have learnt and practised my duty!" An emblem on the Lord's Day, to serve the Almighty, together with his

brethren, is no light part of a Christian's duty, or which he is in any degree at liberty to omit. Too many bad people, I confess, do come to church; but let it be remembered, at the same time, that none of the good stay away.

I shall in my next discourse proceed to the commandments of the second table, which contains the heads of our duty towards our neighbour.

SERMON CXLV.

By GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Breechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Catechism.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

In my explanation of the catechism I have already gone through with the commandments of the first table; I now proceed to consider those of the second. These open with the injunction to honour our father and mother; and surely, in the regulation of our conduct towards each other, no precept could with greater propriety take the lead: after that entire and boundless obedience due from all to God, the next degree of respect and reverence is due from children to their parents.

For this you have the divine express command, with the promise of a reward annexed to it,—“Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” This indeed chiefly respected the Jews, and might either hold forth length of days as a reward to the dutiful, individually; or might promise the long possession of the land of Canaan to the whole nation, if this precept were observed in general: but there is no reason to doubt but that Christians also, who conscientiously honour their parents, may reasonably look for a temporal recompence to their obedience. In the first place, St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, setting before them this commandment, insists on the promise annexed to it; and secondly, dutiful children are, according to the common course of things, likely to pro-

per and do well in the world. The whole of life is apt to take its colour from the employment of our youth, and that employment of it, which is most agreeable to our parents, is commonly the most to our own advantage.—I need not mention motives of gratitude, they are too obvious; he who is ill-behaved and cruel to the authors of his being, the fosterers of his childhood, to whom will he be kind? he who is negligent of this first and great duty, of what other can we expect that he will be mindful?

The sixth commandment forbids murder. The atrociousness of this crime is so great, and it is so certainly followed by the punishment of death from the laws of our country, that there is no necessity to dwell on it. The remonstrances or warnings of the preacher can have little effect on him who can harbour in his breast any idea of it; let us, however, devoutly pray against, and carefully avoid, those unruly passions, envy, hatred, and malice, and all kinds of uncharitableness, which are the usual steps that lead to it.

Adultery is prohibited by the seventh commandment. By many civilized nations this crime was punished with death, and even by the divine law which was given to the Jews, and that to both the parties concerned in it, and surely very deservedly; for there is no offence by which the order of society is more disturbed, none by which the peace of individuals is more cruelly wounded. On the side of the married person there is perjury added to impurity, and in every case there is the greatest immorality and the basest selfishness. What can shew a more total want of generosity than, for a transient satisfaction to ourselves, to destroy the peace of a fellow-creature—perhaps of a friend—for his whole life! The punishment among us is not now so great, at least not by the law; but let us not be deceived; the guilt is still the same, and the penalty is only delayed to be exacted with greater severity by the hand of God. I must just observe that this commandment has been judged to comprise every deviation from chastity whatever; nor is the Christian law, which threatens adultery, less severe against every other species of impurity—

"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

In the eighth commandment, the prohibition of all kinds of injustice, by which the property of another is invaded, is comprised; not only he who robs me openly on the highway, or who breaks into my dwelling and bears off my goods, but he who, in any other less notorious and observable manner defrauds me, is guilty of disobeying this precept against stealing.—The great man, who avails himself of superior power to deprive me of my right, and sets me at defiance, because I have not the means of applying to the law for protection; the worldly wise man, who takes advantage of superior cunning to over-reach me in our bargains; and the tradesman, who makes improper profits, either by adulterating the commodity in which he deals, by a deficiency in the weights and measures, or by any other manner of injustice, are all of them no less guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment, than the highway man or the house-breaker.

When understood in this extensive manner, which it certainly ought to be, it is to be feared that there are too many who would be shocked at the name of stealing, who are too intimate with the offence.

As the sixth commandment aims to guard our life, and the eighth our property, the ninth is intended for the preservation of our characters—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."—The most heinous violation of this precept is that of those infamous persons who, in a court of justice, and with the solemnity of an oath, assert what they know to be untrue, against an innocent man, and bring perhaps his life, perhaps his property, but certainly his good name into danger. This is a crime of so deep a dye, that I trust there is no need to warn any of my present audience against it: the commandment is, however, too often transgressed, even in the best regulated societies in less eminent degrees;—and such transgressions are the source of very much of the unhappiness of social life.

Next to his guilt, who swears publicly to my prejudice what he knows to be false, is that of him who affirms the same

falsity in private, with a design to traduce my reputation. It is something, that the forms of justice are wanting—it is something, that Almighty God is not immediately affronted by solemn appeal;—but, in every other respect, the injury to the party defamed is often as great, and the stroke as wounding, as that which is given by the hand of the executioner. There are many other ways of infringing this commandment, where the degree of criminality, though still inferior, is yet great; as when we speak ill of others on suspicion only—on slight grounds—or on vague report—or when we do it unnecessarily—or take a pleasure in it—or do not speak in their defence, when we hear them unjustly or maliciously attacked. It is, besides, ungenerous and unjust—ungenerous to sport with the characters of our fellow-creatures, on which their reception in the world, and sometimes their bread, depends—unjust, because it is not doing unto them as we would wish they should do unto us.

The laws of the last table conclude with "Thou shalt not covet."—The actual invasion of the property of another, having been already prohibited,—the mere desire to possess it, is now forbidden; and we should set ourselves assiduously to obey it, whether we consider our own happiness, our duty towards our neighbour, or towards God.

For, first, the contrary temper to what is here enjoined, makes a man miserable; as, if he once gives free scope to his desires, he is never likely to be satisfied; success will but add fuel to the flame—the more objects of his wishes he gains, the more ardent he will still be in pursuing others—and content will be, for ever a stranger to his breast.

Secondly, it is an unjust temper, probably in itself, since we are not far from hating the man whom we envy, and for whose possessions we greatly long—and almost certainly in its effects, for he will not, when a convenient opportunity offers long scrupulously restrain his hands from the property of another, in the hope of possessing which he permits his heart to riot uncontrolled.

Lastly, it is an irreligious temper, since it implies a discontent with God's dispensations towards us; and, as it usually en-

the whole heart and affections, it shies all thoughts of piety and another world.

Such are the celebrated laws of the two tables—laws which, I have before observed, were spoken by God's mouth, and written with his finger—you perceive how excellent they are in themselves, and how proper for man to obey.—Let us, then, devoutly offer up our prayers, that they may all be deeply engraven on the fleshy tablets of our hearts!

SERMON CXLVI.

By GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Catechism.

LUKE XI. 1.

One of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray.

In my last discourse on the catechism, I concluded my explanation of the ten commandments. From these we are informed that we learn our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbour; and, in the answers to the two following questions, these duties are set down at large: but I have already, in my remarks on the commandments, anticipated the chief of what I could say on them; and as to those points on which I have not spoken, they are expressed in the catechism itself, in so clear a manner, that there is no necessity for me to dwell on them.

To understand, and to obey the commandments, should be the study and the endeavour of our whole lives; but our own exertions will not do alone; if God does not grant his assistance to them, however strenuous they may be, they will be vain;—to obtain, therefore, this assistance, it is our duty, at all times, to call for it by attentive and fervent prayer. I proceed, then, to take into consideration that most perfect form which was composed by our Lord, at the request of his disciples, and is called by his name—the Lord's Prayer. Of all the general forms of address to the Supreme Being, which are extant, it is undoubtedly at the same

time the most rational and the most devout; so that (as it has been well said*) whether we have an eye to the preaching or the praying of our Redeemer, the observation is equally just—"That never man spake like this man."

The Lord's Prayer contains six distinct petitions, besides the address at the beginning, and what is called the doxology, at the conclusion. The address is concise, but replete with meaning—"Our Father which art in heaven." It is observable, that we are not directed to say my father, but our Father, which seems designed to remind us, first, of the vast authority and dominion of God, extending over all mankind—and, secondly, of the relationship which we bear to each other, he being the common parent of us all—and, consequently, of the obligation under which we lie, to cultivate and entertain an universal affection and good will.

The application of Father, of which we are permitted to make use, reminds us of our being allied to him in many respects—by nature, for he created us, and that after his own image—by providence, for he constantly preserves and protects us—by grace, for he renews us again, according to his image, after that, by Adam's fall, and our own manifold iniquities, we have detached and destroyed the resemblance—every way he is our Creator and Father. There is something, likewise, attractive and winning in the title—God, or Lord, imply such perfection, and such super eminent authority, that, conscious as we must be of our meanness and unworthiness, we might be discouraged in our approaches to him; but the name of Father supports and emboldens. What earthly parent is there who does not love and desire all manner of good for his offspring? "And if men, being evil, do give good gifts unto their children, how much more will our Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" "When art in heaven." God is substantially present every where alike; but he does not every where equally discover himself, nor does he display every where, with equal splendour, the beams of his

glorious majesty. The Scripture frequently mentions a place of his special residence: here is his royal court, here his imperial throne, and here he is attended upon by saints and angels. This place is called Heaven, and sometimes the highest heavens, and by his presence here God is described, both to distinguish him from other earthly parents, and to increase our reverence towards him, when we bring to mind his super-eminent glory and majesty.

The first petition is "Hallowed or sanctified be thy name." God's name means himself, and when we pray that it may be hallowed or sanctified, we mean to ask that all mankind may make a distinction, observe a distance between God and other things, and that they may give to him the most decided and rivalled preference: we mean to request of the Almighty to this effect—"Mayest thou every where be had in the highest veneration! May all honour, praise, and service be rendered unto thee by men, and by us, who are now addressing thee in particular!"

"Thy kingdom come," is the second petition. This would be more justly and intelligibly translated, if it were—"Thy reign come." The profession of pure Christianity is in the Scriptures constantly called the reign of God. The petition here used seems more immediately to respect the state of things at the time when Christ taught this prayer to his disciples: they were instructed here to desire, that the Gospel might be speedily and effectually extended all over the earth; then in figurative language would commence the reign of God!

There is but too much reason, however, for us at this day to continue the petition, when we recollect that a very large part of the world is not yet converted to Christianity, and that, even of those who do call themselves Christians, too many are such only in name, and that men in general are far, very far distant from the purity which the Gospel enjoins. The complete reign of God implies that the whole globe should be Christians, and such Christians as our Master commands. This is a state of things which possibly may never entirely

arrive; but we ought to pray, and hope that we are continually making nearer approaches to it. Such prayers, I am sure, are our duty, and I think there are grounds for such hopes.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is the third petition. Every decree of the Almighty is unquestionably received with the utmost complacency and the most entire satisfaction, by those pious and loyal spirits who surround his throne, and they are certainly ever prompt and eager to shew the most perfect obedience to his commands: such complacency and satisfaction in all events, and such obedience to all the divine commands, we in this petition desire may be exhibited by mankind. May we as fully acquiesce in all thou doest, and as exactly obey all thou enjoinest, as the blessed angels!

The fourth petition is—"Give us this day our daily bread." This is well paraphrased in the catechism itself:—"I pray unto God that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies." Two explanations are given of this petition; it probably comprises both; either the bread of the time to come, that is, the happiness of felicity, or our maintenance in this present life. The first respects our souls, and the latter our bodies. Observe the modesty of the petition as relating to earthly things, and be careful in all your other prayers to conform to it. It asks not for riches, elegance, splendour, but for bread; and though under the term bread is, doubtless, comprehended all necessities, yet they are clearly necessities alone, not superfluities. Nor do we ask even for necessities, to make us so far beforehand that we should be independent of God; but, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" grant us what may suffice for our present support; for the rest we trust cheerfully to thy providence; we cast all our care upon thee, in full knowledge and confidence that thou carest for us.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," is the fifth petition. The first step towards obtaining forgiveness of our sins, is to be sensible of them, and to confess them. "If we say that we have no sin, we de-

ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now this petition implies confession, in as much as by the very asking of forgiveness of sins, we own that we have been sinners: we, however, annex a condition on which we apply for this forgiveness, which is, that we ourselves pardon those who have in any way offended against us. Let us then be very careful, when we approach the throne of mercy, to bear no malice or hatred in our hearts, to wish no ill to any of our fellow-creatures, however they may have provoked us, but to be ready on any opportunity to do them all service. "If you forgive to men their trespasses (says our Saviour) your heavenly Father will also forgive you." The reverse is likewise true.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." is the last petition: for I think, though it consists of two clauses, it may be considered as one petition. I have seen these words changed for others, which are in my opinion more agreeable to the sense of the original language. "Abandon us not to temptation, but preserve us from evil." The phrase, "lead us not into temptation," seems to imply, that we believe God to be the author of it, which he certainly never is of the sort of temptation here intended: whereas, 'abandon us not, nor permit us to go into temptation,' steers clear of this seeming impropriety. The word, which is translated *deliver*, means more than that—it means *preserve*, by which may be understood, not merely 'free us from the evils into which we have fallen, but prevent us from falling into any evils at all.' Temptation is of two kinds; one is sent to give the virtuous an opportunity of displaying their good qualities: such was that of Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his son; such were those into which the early Christians fell, when they were so severely persecuted; and such are those which good men now experience, when they meet with vexations and afflictions, and pass victoriously through them. The other sort of temptations are those occasions of

sin, which but too often occur, that are by their own violence, and the weakness of those to whose lot they fall, insurmountable. It is obvious that they are these latter against which we pray, as these only are prejudicial to us, the former tending to the glory of God and the good of our own souls. "Preserve us from evil:"—that greatest of all evils, Sin, and the consequences of sin, the anger of God, are here principally intended: but yet, in an inferior degree, it is certainly allowable to have in our eye a preservation from temporal evils; but this must be accompanied with the filial submission of our blessed Saviour to the disposal of the Almighty—"Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

The concluding clause of the Lord's Prayer is called the Doxology, the meaning of which is, a form of ascribing glory to God:—"For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." 'Thou hast a perpetual and immovable authority, by which at all times thou directest and governest all things, wherefore we profess to rely on thee alone, and have a full confidence in thee in all our wants; thine is the glory; all honour and reverence, all love and thankfulness, are due unto thee, as in the beginning, so at this present time, and will be to all eternity.'

Having thus gone through with each article of the Lord's Prayer separately, I shall conclude with taking a more connected view of it, by presenting you with it in a short paraphrase.

O thou, the great creator and preserver of me and all the rest of the universe, who art enthroned in majesty above all height, and dwellest in light which no eye can approach; mayest thou be honoured by all thy innumerable creatures, as thy unspeakable greatness requires! may their minds be impressed with just sentiments of thy wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence!

"Thy kingdom come." Oh! hasten the period when the religion which thou hast graciously revealed to us by thine only begotten Son, may be professed all over the world in its original purity, and may obtain such an influence over the hearts and lives of all its votaries, that thy will may be submitted to and per-

formed on earth as it is in heaven! that we, as far as the weakness of humanity will allow, may as exactly be guided by thy good pleasure as the blessed angels!

"Give us this day our daily bread."

During our passage through this transitory state, do thou, who gave us life, give us the means of supporting it; we pray not for superfluities to consume on our own lusts, nor do we too anxiously look forward into futurity; we will be satisfied with a moderate present provision, nor have we the foolish desire to be independent of thee.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Remember that we are but dust, and, on our sorrow and amendment, pardon us all in which we have offended; be not extreme to mark what we have done amiss. And as thou hast justly made it a condition of obtaining mercy from thee, that we shew mercy to our brethren, afford us thy assistance to conquer any imperfections in our temper; subdue in us all tendency towards malice and resentment; and grant that our benevolence may be universal, and without exception!

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Permit us not to fall a sacrifice to the snares of the world, the allurements of the flesh, or the artifices of the devil: let us not be tempted above what we are able to bear: in every age, in every station, in every change of circumstances, surround us with the shield of thy all-powerful protection! In prosperity, and in distress, in health, and in sickness, let thy holy spirit guard us from the approach of spiritual evil; and when we arrive at the closing scene of our earthly pilgrimage, still be thou near to aid and support us; suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee; nor let thy care of us conclude with this mortal life, but in the day of judgment also, of thy great mercy, good Lord deliver us! Save us from the bitter pains of eternal death, and receive us into the happy mansions of saints and angels. These petitions we humbly offer to the throne of thy grace, in full confidence both of thy mercy and omnipotence: thou who spake and it was done, commanded and it was made fast, all that we can ask or want,

thou canst abundantly confer on us; boundless and uncontrollable is thy power — and dominion, and to thy glory and kingdom there is no end!

SERMON CXLVII.

BY GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

Rector of Beechamwell, Norfolk.

On the Catechism.

St. JOHN, xiii. 35.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.

I AM now arrived at my concluding discourse on the catechism; it will be taken up with explaining the two sacraments; those peculiar rites of the Christian religion, ordained by Christ himself, as the distinguishing marks by which his disciples were to be known. In doing this, I shall observe the method of the catechism itself, and, first, explain the nature and meaning of a sacrament in general; secondly, I shall consider the sacrament of baptism; and thirdly, that of the Lord's supper.

"How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his church?" In the answer to this first question, we are told that there are "two sacraments only, as generally necessary to salvation." The number is mentioned, because in the church of Rome they observe several others, for which we Protestants affirm there is no foundation in the Scriptures. The word 'generally' is inserted from a charitable motive; it means, that though, for the most part, the observance of these sacraments can only insure to us salvation, yet in cases, where from ignorance or want of opportunity, they have been neglected, that God may pass over and pardon the omission.

We are next told, that the meaning of the word sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." That is, a sacrament is made up of an outward part and an inward

part, something which is visible to us, ~~the~~ something which is invisible; the former is some action in which we partake, which is a sign, token, or representation of the latter; this latter is some grace or favour from heaven; and the outward action in which we partake, is a means of acquiring this grace or favour, and a pledge to assure us that we shall acquire it. Now consider this explanation of a sacrament in general, with respect to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. In baptism, water is the outward sign; the purification of our hearts, the inward grace; do you perceive the resemblance? as your bodies are made clean by water, so baptism, by which you are made Christians, cleanses and purifies your minds. It was also ordained by Christ himself; you remember his command to his apostles, just before his ascension into heaven:—"Go ye into the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In all covenants, you know, there are conditions made by each party; the Gospel is a gracious covenant between God and man: on our part, the conditions are faith and obedience; on God's part, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Now by the sacrament of baptism, we become entitled to these benefits, and it is a seal or pledge of God's, that if we observe the conditions promised by ourselves, or our sureties, he will not fail to bestow them on us.

Let us now try the above explanation of a sacrament, with respect to the Lord's supper. Here the outward visible sign is, bread and wine; the inward spiritual grace, the strengthening and refreshing of our souls. As bread and wine nourish and support the body, so the celebration of the sufferings and death of Christ does, or ought to, excite in us a quick sense of gratitude for what he has done for us; to animate us to a closer attachment to Him; to create in us a stronger abhorrence of sin; and affection for virtue; and by this means to nourish and support our souls. It was likewise ordained by Christ himself: this done immediately before his death, in the presence of all the apostles; he himself partook of it with them, and

left it as his dying request and command, that they should continue to observe this rite in remembrance of him. It is likewise a means whereby we appropriate to ourselves the benefits of our Redeemer's death: he has thought fit to appoint such means, and, I confess, I do not see how any Christian can reasonably expect, whilst he neglects them, to attain the glorious end. As to its being a pledge to assure us of God's mercy, consider what it represents;—the body of Christ, which was broken, and the blood of Christ, which was poured out, to make atonement for our iniquities: to procure for us the pardon of our sins. What may we not expect when we are calling to mind such an amazing instance of good-will to men, as this? May we not be certain, that he who withheld not from us his only Son, will, with him, bestow on us all manner of good gifts? Thus, you see, baptism and the Lord's supper exactly answer to the description of a sacrament; they both contain outward and visible signs; water in the one; bread and wine in the other: these signs also represent inward spiritual graces; water represents purification from sin; and bread and wine, an increase and stability in virtue: they were likewise ordained by Christ, and are means of obtaining, and pledges that we shall obtain certain graces and benefits.

We will now consider what farther is said in the catechism, with respect to each of them.

Of those who are baptized, we are told, there is required, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament." The primitive church was extremely strict in this particular. Before Christianity was established, when persons grown to manhood offered themselves to baptism, no one was admitted till he could give proof of his sorrow for his past evil life, and till he could offer reasons for his faith in Christ; and it was afterwards expected, that he should shew his sincerity by his future virtuous and pious behaviour. But if this were the custom, and if faith and repentance are really necessary, it is a very natural question which follows, "Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they can

give proof of neither?" The answer is satisfactory; their godfathers and godmothers promise both for them, and when they come to years of discretion, they themselves are bound to perform them; and for this plain reason, because the engagements, which have been made in their names, are so greatly for their good. And we accordingly find, that the custom universally prevails of taking on ourselves, at our confirmation, those vows which were made by our sureties at our baptism.

It now remains that I consider the Lord's supper. There is a difficulty in the catechism, with respect to this, which should not be passed over: we are told that the body and blood of Christ are "verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful." This expression sounds like the doctrine of the Papists: that the words which are said over the bread and wine by the priest, convert them into the real body and blood of Christ! but this certainly is not the sentiment of our church; by being verily and indeed taken, we may, and ought to understand only, that the benefits of our Redeemer's death are truly received by the faithful believer and worthy communicant alone. Of these benefits I have already spoken, and indeed they are so plainly expressed in the catechism, that it is unnecessary to dwell on them; the 'strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.' The subject is closed with a description of the requisites for the worthy partaking of this sacrament, which are said to be "Examination of ourselves, whether we truly repent of our former sins; a stedfast purpose to lead a new life; a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ; a thankful remembrance of his death; and a charitable, benevolent disposition towards all men."

Now these are but the ordinary duties of a Christian; and though perhaps no man performs them in the perfect manner in which he ought, yet, without aiming at the performance of them, he is equally unfit for any other religious duty, as he is for receiving the sacrament; and if he resolves not to try to make himself more fit, he might as well cast off all religion whatever. The subject is of the

utmost importance; I must be excused if, in dwelling on it a little, I repeat frequently the same arguments. Unhappy errors prevail to too great a degree with respect to this ceremony, to the very great prejudice of religion, and danger even of many well-disposed persons. Mankind were in a fallen state, overwhelmed with ignorance and wickedness, when Jesus Christ came down from heaven to teach and to save them. His whole life was passed in the former of these employments, and he willingly encountered a most painful and ignominious death to compass the latter. It was just before he died, that he appointed to be observed, in perpetual remembrance of him, this participation of bread and wine; 'This bread (says he) represents my body; this wine represents my blood; when you eat and drink them, think of what I have undergone for you, and of the great advantages which you have gained by it.' "Do this in remembrance of me." Now there is nothing mysterious in this; nothing more than what all may understand: you are required to do a plain act, to shew your gratitude for the greatest instance of benevolence that ever was: do you, or do you not, believe that Christ died for us, and left us this command? If you do not, there's an end of the matter; but if you do, how can you stand excused in your own eyes for refusing to comply with his so earnest request? You will not tell me it is too much trouble! what! to pass one hour in celebrating the goodness of that friend and Saviour, who spent all the hours of his life, and lastly, sacrificed his life itself, in your service!

Besides, it is my duty to tell you, that there is much reason to fear, that to those who wilfully shut their eyes against what they ought to do in this particular, and

* Arguments and persuasions to frequent communion were enforced by the author from the pulpit, in many sermons: these, in his lifetime, he took occasion to throw together into a small pamphlet, which he published under the title of "A Familiar Treatise on the Sacrament,"—And it is for this reason that the 'repeated arguments,' to which allusion is made above, are not reprinted in this work, as the writer himself had given them to the world in another form.

absent themselves altogether from the Lord's table, all which he has done and suffered, will have been in vain.

But you are afraid, perhaps, you will say: the threats of St. Paul, which are again repeated in the communion service, terrify and alarm you; you cannot flatter yourselves that you shall be worthy partakers of the Lord's supper; and you therefore think it safer wholly to abstain from it! You are then resolved still to continue in your sins; you are determined not to examine yourselves and repent; not to have hope in Christ, nor to be in charity with your brethren;—for unless this be the case, if you have but a desire to turn to God, and a wish to be in charity with your neighbour, with a firm purpose to endeavour both, you may with the greatest safety draw near unto the Lord's table. The threats of St. Paul are principally directed against those to whom he writes, the Corinthians, on account of some irregularities, of which they had been guilty in celebrating this sacrament: as we celebrate it in a different manner, the same irregularities are not now practicable; therefore the apostle's threats scarce seem applicable to the Christians of these days; and even to the Corinthians, the punishment denounced is not so great as we may suppose it. There is one word, which has been too strongly translated in our Testament; in the original, the sense of the word evidently is not “damnation,” but “condemnation.”—“For he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself;”—and the word does not mean eternal, but temporal condemnation; does not mean punishment in the next, but correction in order to amendment in this world: the very next verse explains it,—“For this cause many among you are weak, and sickly, and some sleep.” Now this certainly can only relate to punishment in this life.

Not that I would be understood, that you should approach the altar with no preparation whatever, with no purposes at all of repentance and amendment; indeed, I think that is scarcely possible, but I would not have you think every little defect a sufficient reason to keep

you away; I would persuade you to do what you can; and it may be, nay it will be, if you persevere, that you will acquire new grace and strength; you will grow in holiness and virtue; what you now look upon with terror, will become your delight; and finally, having finished your earthly course, you shall, from partaking of the table of your Lord here on earth, be advanced to the enjoyment of his blessed society, in the mansions of his Father.

SERMON CXLVIII.

JOHN NARLETON, D.D.

Chancellor of the Diocese, and Canon Residentiary of the Cathedral Church of Hereford.

On setting God before us.

PSALM xvi. 9.

I have set God always before me.

THE several duties of man, as a reasonable creature, are conveniently stated under three heads. The first, to revere the Creator, and to obey his will. The second, to love his fellow-creatures, and to advance their welfare. The third, to use rightly the faculties of his nature, his understanding, his affections, and his senses. In the discharge of these obligations, he is bound to follow the best conclusions of his reason, assisted by such revelation, or supernatural instruction, as it hath pleased God to give him.

In the revelation delivered to mankind by Jesus Christ and his apostles, these general duties are clearly exhibited to our view. They are laid before us in their several parts and subdivisions. They are recommended to us by the most prevailing arguments; by an appeal to our natural sentiments; by an explicit declaration of the Will of God; by a solemn denunciation of reward and punishment. The disciple of Christ is instructed to live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”* His reason and his experience prove to him,

* Titus, ii. 12.

that if he live otherwise, he is neither wise nor happy. Sobriety, benevolence, and piety, are the ornaments of his human nature, and the graces of his Christian character. His duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself, has been the lesson of his early youth : and if he remember it in the conduct of his life, he will enjoy the approbation of his own mind, the esteem of men, and the blessing of Heaven.

This distribution of our duties, taken from their respective objects, referring to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, is clear and natural. For what is plainer than that reverence and obedience are due to the Supreme Being ? that we owe justice and kindness to our fellow-creatures ? that sobriety, or self-government, contributes to the health of mind and body, and to the true exercise and enjoyment of all our faculties ? Nevertheless it is equally evident, that every duty, whatever be its immediate end or object, is a duty to God : it is a debt of homage to the Creator : it is an act of obedience to his sovereign, all-perfect will. He who is unjust, or cruel, or uncharitable, not only fails in his duty towards his neighbour, but also offends the common author of their being, in the violation of his benevolent and righteous laws. He who, by vicious habits, injures his constitution, degrades his understanding, and depraves his moral sentiments, while he forgets his duty towards himself, sins also against God ; abusing the gifts of his providence, and overleaping the salutary bounds which his wisdom and goodness have prescribed. So that the want either of sobriety, or of benevolence, is always, in its proportion, a defect of piety.

There is a connexion also between our duty to our neighbour and our duty to ourselves. The neglect of sobriety is generally attended with an infringement of benevolence, and a violation of social duty. It is not easy, it is indeed scarcely possible, for a man to injure himself, without injuring his neighbour. The great society of mankind is a continual chain, in which every link has, on the one side, a dependence, on the other, an influence. Every breach of self-government hurts the community by a portion

of bad example : very few exist without partners and abettors : and those which are of a more private and solitary nature, render a person unpleasing and unuseful to society. Pride makes him imperious ; and sometimes oppressive. Immoderate love of self abates his love of others ; it is apt, at the least, to blast the fruits of his benevolence ; and envy withers it at the root. Perpetual dissipation chills the heart ; and weakens the inclination, as it does too often the power, to be generous. In short, a due temper and rectitude of mind is the source of kind and charitable behaviour. Every corruption which any one allows within, will, in some degree, tinge his social character ; and will affect the comfort of those who are connected with him, whether in civil or domestic life. But every greater failure in personal duty has a direct and immediate operation upon the rights and happiness of mankind. Some errors in private conduct render a man inattentive to the interests of his family ; to the suitable support of his wife ; or to the education and welfare of his children. Others put it out of his power to be just : and while he says to himself indiscreetly “ may I not do what I will with my own ? ” he slides imperceptibly into a situation which his heart condemns, and finds himself bearing hard upon the property of others. Some personal vices are an open and decided attack upon the happiness of individuals, and the order and welfare of society. To corrupt the innocence of one fellow-creature to encourage the profligacy of another, to assist in leading both to infamy and ruin, is assuredly no dictate of benevolence or humanity. And for him who sacrifices the honour and happiness of families to his own ungovernable pursuits, or makes the dearest interests of his friend or neighbour the sport of his vanity, or the amusement of a vacant hour ; he has, in all civilized communities, been truly considered not only as a depraved individual, but as a noxious citizen, amenable to public justice. So generally dependent is social duty upon private virtue : and so ill-founded is the apology sometimes offered for a person ruined by his dissipated and vicious conduct, (of

which, though you may allow and commend the candour, yet will I am persuaded, condemn the fallacy, and lament the evil tendency; that he is no man's enemy but his own." That he is hostile to his own happiness, is weighty cause of repentance to himself, and of compassion to every generous mind: but has he no other parent to lament his errors? no family to taste the bitter fruits of them? has he no connexion with his neighbour, or his country? no obligation to promote the general welfare of mankind? Let not any such false calculation deceive the unexperienced and unwary youth: let it not throw a specious veil over the unsocial qualities, and widely extending evils of vice: let it not abate his abhorrence of any conduct which is unfriendly to virtue, hurtful to others, dishonourable to the Christian name, unsuitable to a reasonable nature, and condemned by the Word of God.

Thus intimately connected are the three classes of moral duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves. They all stand upon the same immovable foundation, the will of God; his will growing out of his infinite perfections; being the result of his wisdom, justice, holiness and goodness; and therefore coinciding ever with eternal right and truth. They are all directed to the same end, the honour of God; that is, the manifestation of his power, and wisdom, and goodness, in the happiness of his creatures. The breach of either kind is a violation of his will, and a deviation from right and truth; tending invariably to defeat the end of his moral government, because it is a certain diminution of happiness; always to the transgressor, generally to some other part of mankind.

Of these three kinds of duty, the first in order is clearly our duty to God; as well from the transcendent dignity of its object, as because it is the foundation and sanction of the other two. And to the right apprehension and practice of this duty, I conceive nothing is equally conducive, as this memorable dictate of the holy psalmist, "I have set God always before me." As his being, his attributes, his relation to us, are the genuine source of all religious affection;

so, in proportion as we contemplate them, will our piety rise or fall. "To remember the Creator,"* is, in the just language of Scripture, a concise representation of a religious character: and the prophane and impious are emphatically distinguished by that which is the ground of their fatal errors, when they are described as "they who forget God:"† both expressions meeting in this reasonable sentiment; that it is morally impossible for a creature endued with reason and affections, at the same time to think of the Supreme Being, all-perfect in himself, and the source of existence and of every approach towards perfection in his creatures, and not to love him, fear him, and desire to obey him. He, therefore, who "sets God" most frequently "before him," is most likely to be uniform in the devotion of his heart, and the obedience of his life.

Though God is one simple undivided essence, a finite understanding must contemplate him, as the eye does every great object, in parts and succession. The attributes of the divine nature, as discoverable by reason, or revealed in Scripture, are a spacious and variegated field of contemplation. His power, his wisdom, his goodness, are daily presented to our view in the works of nature, moving before us in perpetual succession and uninterrupted order. His holiness and justice, according to our natural conceptions, are inseparable from an all-perfect being. His universal presence and providence are suggested by our notions of a being self-existent; and they are proved by the preservation of the universe. These attributes of God are declared in Scripture, with the authority and precision of divine knowledge; and illustrated with the force of heavenly eloquence. In this sublime contemplation, which way soever we turn our eyes, we meet with powerful incentives to reverence and obedience. But there is one point of view in which we may consider them, best suited to our situation, and most conducive to our improvement; uniting in a manner every other; if we

* Eccles. xii. 1.

† Psalm, l. 22.

"set God before us" as the moral governor of the universe; if we behold in him our sovereign lawgiver; the witness and judge of our behaviour; the dispenser of our happiness in every state; the immediate source of it in a world to come.

If we attend a moment to our notions of God, and the relation which we bear to him, we shall not hesitate to acknowledge that he is our sovereign lawgiver; that his will is the complete and universal rule of our moral conduct. Whatever he commands, is right in itself and best for us: this is evident from the consideration of his holiness, his wisdom, and his goodness. That he has a claim to our obedience, and will enforce it, is the consequence of his sovereignty and his justice. Upon a conformity to his will, as he is the foundation and measure of moral fitness, must depend the rectitude of our conduct, and the perfection of our nature. To obey him must be the first duty, and first interest, of us and every reasonable creature.

To this end it is incumbent upon us, by every possible mean, to discover the will of God. The first way to attain this knowledge, is the use of our natural reason. "This is the law written in our hearts,"* consisting partly of those general principles which, more in number or fewer, are evident to every understanding; and partly of such particular conclusions as we are able to derive from them. It is certain, however, that the Almighty never left man entirely to this partial and imperfect guide. It appears that he gave our first parents one injunction† which was not discoverable by the light of nature. This revelation could not be made to them without an explicit declaration of his being and providence. The sentence passed upon their disobedience, laid open several of his attributes; presenting to them, in the most striking manner, his justice, power, and mercy. And yet, with all this supernatural information, transmitted, doubtless, by the first parents to their children and posterity, the reason of man was incapable of directing him to the knowledge and per-

formance of the divine will. Of this we have abundant testimony from the conduct of succeeding generations. We learn from sacred story, the general corruption which prevailed before the flood, and the idolatry and wickedness which followed it. The volumes of profane history have left us no traces of any one nation upon earth, wherein the established worship was not in general absurd and impious, and their public and avowed manners stained with some gross enormity. The modern accounts of countries not enlightened by the Gospel, give us a like unwelcome representation of their religious knowledge and morality; all together, amounting to a decisive proof, drawn from the uniform experience of near six thousand years, that human reason, that first gift of heaven, the great distinction of our nature, the basis of our moral agency, and the channel of our wisdom and happiness, is nevertheless utterly insufficient, alone, to make us wise or happy; unable to lead us to the knowledge and the practice of the will of God.

The second, and only remaining method of discovering the will of God, is a supernatural declaration of it. That God should disclose his will to mankind by a voice from heaven, is, in itself, equally reasonable and credible, as that he should do it by the still suggestions of our understanding: the only difference lies in this, that the one happens at all times, the other at a few appointed seasons. That God should sometimes visibly interpose in the government of his universe, is just as intelligible, and as probable, as that he should for the most part do it invisibly. The ordinary course of nature is, in itself, as wonderful as any extraordinary interruption of it: each is, in its place and order, the work of an Almighty Power: nor is it more surprising, for example, that a dead body should, upon some great occasion, be restored to the functions of life, than that these very functions should be produced and supported in thousands of species, and millions of individual animals, by mechanisms and laws unvaried from the creation to this day. He who can first explain to us the union of the human soul and body, who can tell us

how the mind acts upon the brain, or the nerves upon the mind, may then dispute the probability of supernatural illumination; or reject a truth revealed, because it is a mystery. We are surrounded with mysteries; that is to say, with natural appearances, the cause and manner of which we cannot explain: we therefore justly refer them to a superior agency, which superintends and regulates the whole. We see a few things; and reason obliges us to believe the rest. "We walk by faith more than by sight." Now this, which is incontestably true in the works of nature and the concerns of life, let us transfer to the subject of religion. That God should reveal his will to mankind, is highly agreeable to his wisdom and goodness; that he has revealed it, is a fact established: the proof of it is, that he has enabled the ministers of his revelation to suspend, or alter the operations of nature; to foretell events depending upon natural causes not yet in operation, and upon the will of free agents yet unborn: the Almighty, by such a clear communication of his power and wisdom, thus giving his sanction to their declarations, and testifying that they were sent by him. We have a chain of prophecies, from Genesis to Malachi, delivered by several persons, in different places, at many distant periods in the wide compass of more than three thousand years: these prophecies, besides other intermediate objects, point, in directions plain and perspicuous, to one great event, describing it in a variety of minute and accidental circumstances, such as no human sagacity could have conjectured separately, much less could they have been, by any finite power or understanding, combined together; and these several predictions meet and correspond in the person of Jesus Christ. That he lived at the season foretold by his prophets and related by his evangelists, we have the acknowledgment of the Jews, his countrymen, and the Romans, their conquerors; of those who in a blinded zeal rejected him, and of those who heard of him with indifference.

We have historical evidence that he proved his divine appointment and character by public undoubted miracles; a fact allowed by the enemies of his person and religion, both Jew and Gentile, in his own and in succeeding ages; and we have proof unquestionable that he foretold two events, unparalleled in the annals of mankind, which have been fulfilling these seventeen hundred years, and are now proceeding before our own eyes: the one, that twelve plain unlettered men should propagate and establish his religion, to be transmitted to distant ages, in contradiction to the favourite passions of mankind, in opposition to the influence of power, wealth, and learning, against the prejudices of every religious communion and every civil society then in the world. The other, that the Jewish kingdom, their religious and civil polity, founded as they were, and once long protected, by the visible hand of Providence, should be dissolved within the lifetime of some of his hearers; that the people should be scattered among all nations; that they shall continue in this dispersion till the completion of another great event, of which the Scriptures give us intimations.* The Jews are actually in this situation, under such circumstances, as never happened (that we know) to any nation upon earth; three millions† perhaps, of a persecuted and persevering race, neither uniting with the people among whom they sojourn, nor forming any separate empire of their own. Let any one weigh these evidences maturely and impartially, let him consider moreover the nature of the Christian Revelation, the importance of its discoveries, and the purity of its precepts; and if he does not receive the Gospel as divine, as a complete revelation of the will and the designs of God, I fear he would not be convinced, though an angel should appear to him, or though a prophet or evangelist should arise before him from the dead. But let him seriously reflect, that if he do not receive the Gospel, and conform to it, it is at his own peril. It is the first duty

* Luke, xxi. 24. Rom. ii. 23, 26.

† Basnage Hist. des Juifs.

* 2 Cor. v. 7.

of man to listen to the voice of his Creator, by whatever medium it may come to his ears. It is not sufficient for him to say, "God hath given me reason, I will conform to this heavenly monitor, and I shall be accepted." God hath also given him instinct, and passions; they also will sometimes stimulate and conduct him rightly: yet if he conform to these monitors only, he will not say he shall be accepted. Now, as his reason was given him to guide his instinct, and to regulate his passions, so revelation is offered to him, to inform and improve his reason: and as it is, does it not claim his acceptance and submission, on the same divine authority, and under the same awful consequences? If it appear that God hath spoken, it matters not whether it be as to Moses, face to face, or as to David, by the mouth of his authentic messenger; it is a dangerous trifling to reject the declaration in either way conveyed; its authority and importance are in both cases the same; "he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me."*

We have therefore in the Christian Revelation an authentic discovery of the will and designs of God. He has therein given us the terms of our acceptance with him: he has marked out a line of conduct which will lead us to our final happiness. The laws which he prescribes to us correspond with the best conclusions of our understanding; and if at any time they draw us to higher degrees of perfection than unassisted reason would have suggested, what is this but a new proof of their heavenly origin, and a fresh argument for our obedience? If "the day-spring from on high hath visited"† and enlightened us, we are to walk by this light; in a plainer path, with better assistance, with more extensive and more inviting views. The disciple of Christ has this great advantage, that his duty is chalked out to him in clear and intelligible characters; the means of performing it are placed in his hands; and his reward is laid before him. Surely, then, he will not employ himself so ungratefully or so unprofit-

ably, as to misinterpret the precepts of his heavenly teacher, or to dispute his obligations to follow them. Will he plead the passions of human nature, or the infirmities of his own constitution? His divine lawgiver "knew what was in man;"* and hath doubtless well adapted his laws to their subject and to their end; to assist and correct the imbecilities of his nature; to improve and guide his understanding; to restrain his passions within salutary bounds; perhaps to render his infirmities an exercise of his virtue, and an increase of his reward. Will he argue, that his particular violations of the Christian law are not injurious to society, to individuals, or even to himself? But can he trace that endless chain of effects and causes which connects the most distant actions, and the most remote events? Does he consider at how many points innumerable the members of society touch each other? so that the undue impulse of one may disturb the temporal order and happiness of thousands? Can he calculate exactly the moral influence which his conduct may have on others? can he measure the imperceptible gradations of human depravity, and foresee the general and incurable corruption which his present actions and habits may one day bring upon himself? Does he know the manner of his future existence? his state and destination in another world; or can he tell precisely how far acquired habits of obedience and holiness may be as essential to his well-being there, as freedom from pain, remorse, or anxiety, are here? In a word, does he reflect, that God is infinitely wise, and good, and powerful? that man is the creature of his hand, and the dependant of his bounty? that his duty is the reasonable tribute of faith and obedience; to believe the declaration of his Creator, and to endeavour to perform his will? that God hath spoken to him in a manner not to be mistaken; "I have shewed thee, O man, what is good;"† walk thou before me in humility and sincerity, and thou shalt be accepted through my covenanted mercy?

* John, xii. 20. † Luke, i. 78.

* John, ii. 25. † Mic. vi. 8.

As God hath given us, by the united light of reason and revelation, a clear declaration of his will, so is he a perpetual witness of our attention to it; of our obedience or our disobedience. The universal presence of the Supreme Being is a truth of which philosophy cannot doubt, and which revealed religion supposes and declares. It is the invisible bond which holds together all created nature; "in him we live, and move, and have our being."* One of the first lessons of moral wisdom is, to have this attribute continually in view; "to set God always before us," as an impartial spectator and judge of our thoughts and actions. "How shall I do this wickedness," how shall I omit this duty, "and sin against God,"† will then be the constant suggestion of conscience, the faithful monitor within. "Am I not in the presence of that best of beings, who created me in order to make me happy? who knows my present interest and my future destination; and imposes no laws upon me, but such as are in every period conducive to my welfare? who is leading me in the ways of his kind and righteous providence, to the full enjoyment and perfection of my whole nature? And shall I be ungrateful to this gracious benefactor? Shall I withdraw myself from his protection? Shall I incur his displeasure? Shall I cease to venerate him with all the faculties of my soul? Shall I neglect to worship him in the retirement of my closet? Shall I refuse to offer him my public homage in the assembly of my brethren, united as we are in the same high obligations, and the same important prospects? Shall the pleasure or the business of the world ever make me forget who it was that created it; that sent me into it; and will soon call me out of it? Shall I pursue the gratification of the present moment, thoughtless of its nature and consequences, as if I had no reason given me to guide me; no rule of prudence, humanity, or religion, to walk by; no equal to feel my injustice; no superior to see, control, and punish it? Shall I receive every blessing of nature; every

advantage of Christian education; perhaps every comfort of society; and forget that gracious Providence, by whom I am thus highly favoured? Shall my whole life and conversation discover no marks of reverence for his sovereignty, his attributes, and his laws? In a word, shall I become, of all the beings in the universe, the most unworthy and the most wretched? a creature endued with reason, assisted by revelation, designed for immortality, living in the presence of the Almighty, without morals, without religion, without God in the world?"

Lastly: we shall do well "to set God before us," not only as our sovereign lawgiver, the spectator and judge of our moral conduct, the supreme dispenser of our happiness in every stage of our being, but also as the immediate source of it in the next approaching period.

The Holy Scriptures give us a very slight view of the world of spirits whither we are going; as extensive, probably, as we are able to comprehend while we are in this material universe; and sufficient to direct and console us in our passage through it. However, they plainly intimate, that the happiness of a future state will principally consist in some nearer contemplation of the divine nature, and in the society of angels and good men. It will be of importance therefore to form ourselves here to such an imitation of the Supreme Being, as is possible for a creature in our imperfect state. In this and every view, it will be true wisdom "to set God before us" in the moral or imitable perfections of his nature; his holiness, his justice, his truth and faithfulness in his declarations and promises; but above all, to admire and imitate his goodness to all his creatures, and particularly to ourselves; his goodness to us in every dispensation of his providence, especially in that which exceeds and crowns them all, the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. I the rather mention the divine goodness as a peculiar object of our contemplation, as it conveys, not only the most pressing argument for a life of gratitude and obedience to God, but also a striking lesson and example for our conduct

* Acts, xvii. 28. † Gen. xxxix. 9.

to our fellow-creatures: "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."* The duties of social life form a very considerable part of religion; upon the due performance of them depends the greatest portion of our happiness here below; we know how deeply it will affect our future expectations; "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, sick, and ye visited me."† The duty and the reward extends to every relation, civil or domestic. Let it then be the favourite study of the wise and good, to contemplate the divine philanthropy, the love of God to man, and to imitate it. Remembering that the happiness of all mankind is the universal care of Providence, the good man will not suffer it to be interrupted or diminished by his own imaginary interests or pleasures. It will rather be the first satisfaction of his life to forward, in the sphere allotted him, the benevolent designs of heaven: to improve the comforts of his friends and relatives, of his neighbours and dependants; to promote the good order of society; to advance the prosperity of his country; to extend his kind offices, as situation may enable him, or as occasions may arise, to every nation under heaven, whether civilized communities or savage tribes; to pour forth his prayers and wishes where the influence of his conduct may not appear to reach: above all, to advance the interests of truth and virtue, of Christian faith and Christian morality; diligently to promote, by his own example, and by every method of wisdom and prudence, the everlasting happiness of mankind in the honour and service of God.

* 1 John, iv. 11. † Matth. xxv. 36.

SERMON CXLIX.

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On Exemplary Conduct.

MATTH. v. 16.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is Heaven.

THIS exhortation, addressed to the first disciples, is a lesson of duty universal and perpetual. It applies to the Christian in every age: and it may be supposed to admonish him in some such manner as this. "Content not yourself with the private satisfaction of thinking and acting rightly. Let your religious knowledge and virtuous conduct be manifest to the world. Let all men know by your actions and conversation, that you are a disciple of Christ. Appear to be what you are: a believer in the Gospel; determined, with the divine assistance, to obey its precepts; and hoping, by the divine favour, to receive its rewards. Thus let your light shine before men. Your knowledge will instruct them; your example will encourage them. They will see your good works, and imitate them. They will praise your heavenly father for his blessings conferred on you and on themselves."

This duty seems at first sight to be easy and delightful. It is natural to an ingenuous mind to express the sentiments, which it has embraced with a deep conviction of their truth and importance. A heart warmed with rational affections will be disposed to pour them forth in action and conversation. He who is engaged in the contemplation of a substantial and eternal good, will probably be moved by self-love alone to speak of the object of his hopes, as a topic pleasing to himself: benevolence will excite him to communicate his principles and his expectations, as an incentive and encouragement to others. One would imagine, therefore, that a good Christian would need no command or

persuasion to suffer his "light to shine before men," and to afford the world the full benefit of his example. There are however some considerations which, misconceived or misapplied, may tempt him to a different conduct.

First. It is in the nature of a virtuous mind, to be modest in estimating its own good qualities, and backward in displaying them. Conscious of its natural imperfections, and of its wilful errors, it is slow to offer itself to observation and inquiry: and if at any time it can, in some degree, satisfy its own notions of duty, it is content with an humble hope of the divine approbation, and is not forward to seek the praise of men.

Secondly. A good person is naturally fearful of any appearance of ostentation; and much more, of any suspicion of hypocrisy. His private, unseen, piety is exposed to no such uncandid interpretation: it lies open to no charge of vanity; it has no witness to dispute its motives, or to doubt its sincerity. He is tempted therefore to conceal his virtues, rather than hazard an imputation of pride or simulation, which would injure the cause of religion; and which he himself would feel the more, in proportion as he deserves it less.

Thirdly. He is confirmed in this modesty and caution, by the admonitions which he finds in the Holy Scriptures, and particularly in this discourse of our Saviour, against an ostentatious and vain-glorious piety: "do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: appear not unto men to fast."*

These three considerations are pardonable, though mistaken, reasons, why men sometimes throw a shade over their piety. They are indeed in their principles laudable; because they spring from an unfeigned love of virtue; an apprehension that religion may suffer by false imputations; and a reverence to the authority of Christ.

There is a Fourth reason, of which we cannot speak so well. This is a fear of appearing singular; a dread of reproach

or ridicule from the libertines and the profane. There are persons who have the wisdom to discern their duty; and the resolution to perform it; and yet they have not courage publicly to avow their principles, and present their conduct to the world. They are awed by the tyranny of fashion, and the boldness of vice. They dare not patronise that virtue, which they love and honour. They offer their secret vows at the shrine of truth; and yet "bow down" publicly "in the house of Rimmon."† They condescend to the most foolish of all hypocrisy; they appear less wise and less virtuous than they are.

In answer to these pleas and temptations, the friend of religion will attend to the following considerations.

First. Though humility be a quality inseparable from a good person, sincerity also is essential to him. What humility may induce him to suppress, sincerity may oblige him to declare. To conceal his belief in the truths of Christianity, is in some degree to deny them; it is at least to convey a presumption contrary to his convictions. To disguise his obedience to the laws of the Gospel, is a sort of insinuation that he doubts their authority and excellence. The love of truth and goodness, which warms his heart, guides his understanding, and forms his conduct, requires him to give them his public testimony and avowed encouragement.

Secondly. With respect to the suspicion of ostentation or hypocrisy, the first maxim of a wise and good man, is to follow the clear dictates of reason and conscience, not diverted from a path so safe and honourable, by any groundless interpretations which may be put upon his words or actions. Such duties as are of a private nature, he performs in retirement: the rest he discharges openly, with sincerity and discretion: giving no occasion to malignant imputations, and leaving any which may possibly arise, to be confuted by the general tenor of his life and manners.

Thirdly. The passages cited from the holy Scriptures, and others similar, are

* Matth. vi. 1. 5. 18.

† 2 Kings, v. 18.

cessures of actual hypocrisy and ostentation. They condemn an appearance of piety and charity which do not exist in the heart; and a vain display of these virtues, when they do; designed to promote the reputation of him who thus imperfectly cultivates them, not the honour of God, or the good of mankind. The admonition is, "when ye give alms, when ye pray, when ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites: put not on the appearance of religion without the reality. Do not your alms, pray not, fast not, to be seen of men; let not the applause of men be your motive." There are virtues which, on some occasions, are more advantageously exercised, and in a manner more becoming, in retirement and privacy: we have an example in the devotion of the closet, and in such acts of charity, as do not require the concurrence of others to obtain their full effect: and yet these same virtues are, on other occasions, exercised more laudably, because more beneficially, in large assemblies and societies; as, for instance, divine worship in churches and families, and public charitable subscriptions. So that these particular precepts of our blessed Lord do not interfere with his general exhortation to a public profession of religion, and an avowed practice of virtue.

The Fourth excuse for concealing our religious sentiments and actions, namely, the fear of reproach or ridicule, is such as no wise man will plead, or attempt to justify; however he may sometimes have the weakness to feel its influence. For what is the opinion, real or pretended, of profligate and thoughtless men, compared with the established truth and everlasting importance of religion, and the unchangeable excellence of virtue? What is their momentary, or even deliberate, censure, opposed to the testimony of conscience, and the approbation of the wise and good? In a point thus intimately connected with our duty to God, the welfare of society, and the eternal happiness of mankind, no difference is to be paid to numbers, rank, or talents, if they happen to be adverse to truth and right. But, in fact, since the propagation of the Gospel, the general sense of mankind has been on the side of religious principle and virtuous behaviour; and the more so

in every age and country, in proportion as its doctrines and precepts are more clearly apprehended. Many who fail in practice, do not err in speculation; and they who err in speculation, do not probably deviate so widely as they may seem, or so decidedly as may be supposed. They have doubtless their moments of recollection, when the strength of reason, the weight of evidence, the natural bias of the human mind to religion, the anxious monitor within, all conspire to recal them from their wanderings. The friend of mankind will not surely, by any appearance of approbation, encourage and confirm them in their transient delusions; or accelerate and precipitate them in their unwise career. He will rather watch the moment of their returning reason, and warn them of their danger: he will at least invite them to the forsaken path, by the inoffensive light of his own sentiments, and by the silent guidance of his example.

Having removed these slender objections to a public profession of religion and an avowed practice of virtue, we come to the argument which imposes this duty upon us. The end of all our actions is happiness, the happiness of ourselves and others; the imperfect, transitory, happiness of this present state; the perfect, permanent, happiness of a world to come. The means of obtaining happiness in every stage of our existence is, without a question, religion; reverence of God, and obedience to his laws. In proportion as the means are generally adopted, and actively pursued, the more generally, and the more surely, will the end be obtained. The duty therefore, and wisdom of every one, is to cultivate religion himself, and to recommend it to others for his own, and for the general good. How then will he most effectually recommend religion? Is it by the reading and meditation of his closet? is it by his private prayers? by his secret alms? by the purity and simplicity of his retired manners? These are excellent beginnings; they are the essential elements of moral perfection; the seed and principle of the Christian life: but as they are studiously withdrawn from observation, they have little influence on mankind. If he desire to pro-

pagate in the world the sacred truths which he believes; if he wish to recommend the heavenly laws which he endeavours to obey; and the everlasting blessings to which he aspires; he will make known his principles, his practice, and his expectations. The general tenor of his conduct and conversation will shew his unvaried piety, free from all suspicious ostentation, or affected singularity. You will perceive, in his whole demeanour, a deep conviction of the attributes of God; a reverent apprehension of his power, his holiness, his justice, his goodness; an habitual sense of his watchful providence, extending over all his creatures, and over every event and incident of their being; a constant recollection of his moral government, dispensing reward and punishment, partly in this present state, completely in a life to come. He will manifest his firm belief in the revelations which the divine mercy hath afforded, to guide and encourage us in the path of duty. That supplication and thanksgiving which he daily presents to Heaven in his retirement, he will at appointed seasons offer in the congregation: publicly testifying his reverence for the Author of his being, his gratitude for all his mercies, his dependence upon him for preservation and happiness. Whenever he speaks of the Supreme Creator, he will express that profound veneration and dutiful affection which he feels continually; a veneration proportioned to his transcendent excellence, an affection inspired by his unbounded goodness. Impressed with a deep conviction of the purity and equity of his laws, he will represent them as the dictates of eternal reason, the measure of human perfection, and the unfailling source of happiness.

In this manner will a wise and good man suffer "his light to shine before men:" not to display his own merits: not to reflect a lustre upon himself; but to recommend religion to their observance, and to lead them to their eternal good. He will consider the Christian revelation as a sacred treasure, which by the blessing of heaven he hath received from his fathers; which he is bound by every obligation of piety to God and charity to man, by the nature of the dispensation, and by the command of its blessed

Author, according to his situation and ability, to diffuse in the present age, and to deliver down to posterity. That love of virtue which the Gospel inculcates, which the Holy Spirit inspires and confirms, which his reason tells him is the perfection and happiness of his being, that sacred flame, he will study to kindle and cherish in the breasts of others. He will point out to them its heavenly origin, its excellence, and its end. For virtue is no other than an imitation of the attributes, and obedience to the will, of God. It is a conformity to the eternal reason and unchangeable truth of things. It is the perfection of every intelligent creature. It leads us to the ultimate object of all our contemplations and affections, the center of all our energy and activity: it leads us to happiness. And that happiness is adequate to every desire and capacity of our immortal nature. It is spiritual; it is unchangeable; it is eternal. For its foundation, it rests upon the truth and promises of God. For its source and measure, it flows from his inexhausted bounty; from his essential goodness, and his covenanted mercies. For its nature, it arises from his indulgent approbation and gracious favour. For its situation, it dwells in his immediate presence.

S E R M O N C L.

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On Temporal Happiness.

PSALM IV. 6.

There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

"Who will shew us any good? who will guide us in the way to a happy life?" It is the universal language of mankind. It is the question of the wise, and the foolish; of the serious and the thoughtless; of every station, and every age. The inquiry is suitable to the nature of man. Instinct impels him to it irresistibly:

reason approves it: the experienced goodness of the Creator adds a sanction and encouragement. It is to be regretted, that an end so just and so important, should not always be pursued by the most wise and efficacious means. It is to be lamented, not only that misery should exist in a world originally designed for happiness, (this in our fallen state is unavoidable;) but that the large portion of happiness yet allowed us, should be diminished and adulterated by our own misapprehension and misconduct.

To correct this fatal error has been the study of the wise and good in every age. The philosopher has appealed to the reason of mankind; the lawgiver has alarmed his passions: and both have called in to their assistance, so far as their knowledge extended, the doctrines and sanctions of religion. To add to the sum of present happiness is the natural result of the precepts of morality: it is the end proposed by the institutions of civil government; it has been always the ostensible object, and sometimes the real one, of false religions; it is one undoubted purpose of the true. Temporal good and evil were the explicit sanction of the law of Moses. Though doubtless, the enlightened worshipper extended his religious prospects beyond the limited period and capacity of the present life; yet the primary reward of his obedience was security and prosperity in the land of Canaan. The proper, peculiar, rewards of the Gospel are perfection and happiness in a life to come; and yet, the blessed Author of it employed himself in soothing the miseries of the present. The works of power, by which he shewed himself the promised redeemer of mankind, and the giver of eternal salvation, were at the same time acts of mercy and compassion, which proved that their present happiness was not unworthy of his care. He not only opened to the view of his disciples the glories of another world, but condescended to sympathize with them in the afflictions of this: he restored to life the only son of the widow;* and he wept over the grave of Lazarus.† His doctrines correspond with his life

and miracles; while they lead us to purity and happiness hereafter, they instruct us how to be virtuous and comfortable here: while they prepare us to be blessed saints in heaven, they make us good citizens, capable of many gratifications upon earth. They tend to soften every evil, moral and natural, which can afflict the human race: showing us that the author of our being designs the happiness of his creatures universal and perpetual; that his kindness knows no limitation or interruption but what arises from their own voluntary errors, from the extensive plans of his gracious providence, and the essential justice of his moral government.

It is permitted therefore to the disciple of Christ, though he hath in prospect a state of glory, splendid beyond imagination, and certain as the attributes of God, to turn his eye to the scene which lies immediately before him. He will not be less worthy of the goodness of the Almighty, if he desire to enjoy his bounty in every place of his habitation, and in every period of his being. Though he be engaged in the duties of religion, in the regulation of his moral conduct, in preparing himself for eternity, he may still ask which is the fairest way to temporal happiness. He is, indeed, too well instructed to consider it as his sovereign or final good; but so far as it is consistent with that higher object, so far as the same way leads to both, he thinks it a just and reasonable pursuit. Nor will the divine or the moralist be employed improperly, if he mark its boundaries, point out its genuine sources, and describe the sentiments and habits, without which it is in no degree to be attained.

With respect to its boundaries, two things are to be considered. One, that the happiness of the present life is, in its nature, imperfect; it is not proportioned to the capacities of the mind, it never arrives at a point beyond which no wish remains: it is unfinished and progressive. It is also subject to abatement, interruption and decay. Its duration is precarious, its end is certain. Such is the constitution of the world, it is the decree of Providence, it is the consequence of the fall. To expect unabated, continued, happiness, is to look for an earthly para-

* Luke, vii, 13, 15. † John, xi, 15.

dise, or to aspire after the nature of angels. The object of our inquiry is the happiness of man in a degenerate and mortal state.

The other point to be considered is, that as man is now in one short, transient, period of his existence, and is preparing for another, eternal and unchangeable; nothing can promote his happiness in the present state, which will destroy or diminish it in that which is to come. And this is true, not only because time is nothing compared with eternity, but also, because man being a reasonable, a thoughtful creature, ever looking into futurity, his happiness depends not more upon his actual enjoyments than it does upon his hopes and fears; and the apprehension of future eternal evil must of necessity destroy the satisfaction of present good. This is so evident that it needs no proof; and it will scarcely admit of illustration. For what are the pleasures of the morning to him who expects assuredly to pass the day, or to close the evening in misery? What would be the amusements of infancy, and the enjoyments of youth, to him who could foresee that they were certainly to be followed by an afflicted manhood, or a wretched old age? And yet these allusions bear no greater proportion to the point before us, than earth to heaven, or a moment to eternity.

Having stated these principles concerning the imperfection of our present enjoyments, and their necessary dependence upon our future expectations; having thus marked the boundaries of temporal happiness, let us inquire into its genuine sources.

First. The foundation of happiness in the present state, is an habitual sense and consideration of the universal presence and providence of God. This is a necessary consequence of the nature of man; a creature endued with reason and thought. As he is a creature, his well-being depends in common with that of the world around him, on the Creator: as he is a reasonable, a thoughtful, creature, ever looking beyond the present, and anxious for the future, a creature that has hopes and fears; his well-being depends also upon his right apprehension of the Creator. The brute enjoys his present existence, thoughtless of the past and future.

To him, therefore, it is of no importance, that the almighty power which sustains him is not invisible only, but utterly unknown. But man is sensible of the condition of his being. He understands his situation to be precarious and dependent. He reflects that his outward frame is frail and corruptible; that his spirit is an immaterial substance, in its nature and operations inexplicable; subject to the vicissitudes of pain and pleasure; aspiring after truth and happiness, but limited in the attainment of either; capable of immortality, but fearful of extinction; piercing into the abyss of time, and into all the possibilities of things, with light sufficient just to render the "darkness visible;" to whom eternal existence and perfect happiness are holden out as objects of reasonable expectation; but to whom annihilation is possible, and even misery, on some suppositions, not improbable. Such a creature is man, seen to himself by the light of reason. Upon whom then can he depend for existence which he so highly values; upon whom, for happiness to which he so ardently aspires; if not upon that gracious self-existent power who created and sustains universal nature? If he forget his presence, or deny his providence, to whom does he look for the preservation of his body in this visible universe; or for the protection of his spirit in new scenes and situations, of which he has strong and interesting sentiments, but of which he can form no idea? He has no guardian to contemplate in the daily vicissitudes and unavoidable anxieties of life! no sovereign to implore for the continuance of health, or the removal or mitigation of sickness! no friend invisible to support him under the loss of parents, of children, or of friends! no guide to conduct him in that awful moment, when he shall be called to follow them! The whole creation is, to his clouded and distempered sight, one vast incomprehensible machine, wherein he discerns no regulator or governor. He knows not therefore what tremendous changes every movement may present to him; nor has he any reasonable security, that the next great revolution may not destroy his being, or suspend his pleasures and expectations, or even place him in a state of suffering. Such is the

situation of the man who lives without a sense of the presence and providence of God; and it is evident that in such a situation he cannot be happy.

Secondly. An essential ingredient of happiness in the present state, is a belief in the revelations of God concerning his future dispensations to mankind. A distinction between virtue and vice is impressed by the Creator upon the human mind. No bad education, no art or prejudice, however they may weaken the impression or abate its influence, can entirely erase it. This distinction is followed unavoidably by the ideas of duty and obligation; of reward and punishment. The best among the sons of men are conscious of frequent deviations from the rule of right: they feel themselves accountable, and obnoxious to the justice of a moral governor. They repent, and form resolutions of better conduct: they amend, relapse, and repent again: and thus their life is a continued conflict between reason and passion, a course of imperfect virtue. Now who shall reflect upon the purity and justice of God, and affirm, without a revelation, that he will accept this partial obedience? Who can assure us, that remorse, the natural consequence of sin, shall be also an atonement for it? or that the virtue of to-day shall clear us from the guilt and punishment incurred by the vice of yesterday? This is a point which it is impossible for unassisted reason ever to ascertain; and yet it involves no smaller interests, than the favour of God, and every prospect of perfection and happiness. To have offended the justice of God without any clear discovery of his mercy; to repent without the assurance of pardon; to live under a state of trial which shall turn upon this precarious issue, and shall decide our unalterable fate; this is surely a situation far removed from happiness.

Again, the expectation of another state after death, is so agreeable to the feelings of nature, so conformable to reason, and so powerfully supported by universal tradition from the first ages, that it has been warmly cherished in every country, in every state of society, and in every generation of men. Such is the instinctive anxiety of mankind to look into this unknown scene of things;

a scene so near them, yet disparted from them by an impenetrable veil; that imagination hath supplied the place of knowledge; and every heathen nation, whether polite or barbarous, hath formed some fabulous representation of it. And yet this high probability of a life to come does not satisfy man's native love of being and anxious desire of immortality: neither can all the conjectures of reason or fancy concerning the nature and condition of that expected state, remove the solicitude which he feels in the contemplation of so important a change.

Thus, in the view of unassisted reason, the consideration of a future state, in itself not absolutely certain, and far less so in its event and consequences, must ever have been a large abatement of earthly happiness. If this ignorance concerning the divine mercy, and the certainty and nature of a future state, was a source of disquietude to the heathen of antiquity, it presses much more severely on the unbeliever of modern times. It is a misfortune to him, even with respect to present happiness, to have been born within the period of the Christian revelation. The Pagan, having less perfect notions of morality, measured his conduct by a more favourable standard: his remorse and apprehensions were, in proportion less frequent, and less painful. He was moreover instructed to believe that sacrifice and ceremony would expiate his errors, and procure the favour of the Deity: and the fair representations which he heard of Elysian happiness, partly soothed his imagination, and partly imposed upon his understanding. But the Christian revelation has long since corrected this imperfect standard of morality, and dispelled these flattering phantoms of superstition: and therefore he who is so unhappy as to neglect it, loses every source of confidence and expectation: he enjoys not a ray of hope, either in the glimmering of fable, or the light of truth. He has not the consolation of heathen ignorance, nor the benefit of Scriptural information. He knows too much to be void of reasonable fears, and believes too little to be capable of well-grounded hope. But the Gospel opens to the believer a clear and animating prospect. It holds forth an adequate atonement for sin: it

offers mercy to repentance: it promises acceptance to a sincere, though imperfect obedience: it confirms the hope of nature concerning a future state; and declares expressly the final reward of virtue in a blessed immortality. We see then, that a belief in the revelations which God hath given us, is essential to the comfort and satisfaction of the present life.

A Third qualification necessary to present happiness, is an attention to the duties of religion and the laws of moral virtue. This follows immediately from the preceding considerations. Reason assures us that we cannot be happy without the approbation of our Creator; and that his approbation cannot be obtained without a reverence for his attributes, and a conformity to his will. It instructs us also, that virtue is in its own nature, and in its genuine consequences, essential to the perfection and happiness of our being. The same truths are affirmed by revelation in a more clear and decided manner. The advantages and promises of the Gospel depend upon religious belief and purity of life. So far then as present happiness is connected with the expectation of future; as it rests upon a conscious sincerity of heart, and an humble hope of the divine favour; it can have no foundation without a virtuous and religious life. Moreover, besides the terrors of conscience, and the apprehension of future recompense, the general tendency of vice is to deprave and diminish the enjoyments of the present hour. When it impairs the constitution, it poisons the very source of earthly happiness. It weakens the native energy of the mind; and robs it of all activity in business, or taste in pleasure. It casts a cloud over the meridian of life, renders it a state of mortification and painful discipline; and hurries it to an untimely end. When vice injures the reputation, and degrades the offender in the opinion of mankind, it destroys the pleasures of society by abating that civility, respect, and friendship, without which it is not a scene of enjoyment, but of punishment: and at length it sends him into a fearful solitude, wounded by the contempt of others, and the reproaches of his own mind. When vice embarrasses his for-

tune, it deprives him of those accommodations, and that rank in society, which education and habit have rendered necessary: evils indeed, which unfortunate virtue will estimate at their real value, and bear with cheerful resignation; but to a mind enervated with dissipation and luxury, without the resources of reason, the testimony of conscience, or the hopes of religion, they shut up every prospect of happiness on earth, and leave it to unceasing mortification, and as to this world, unavailing penitence. It is a fatal error in "the science of living," to presume, that a contempt of moral obligation will enlarge the sphere of pleasure; to suppose that the libertine, whatever he may lose or suffer in a future state, obtains the better portion in the gratifications of the present. All calculation and probability are clearly against him; and experience decides the question every day.

A Fourth qualification necessary to present happiness, is a disposition to live in harmony with all mankind, and to promote their welfare: a love of peace, and an active benevolence. These qualities are indeed comprehended under the former head, as they hold a high rank among the moral virtues. But for their peculiar importance to the comfort of life, and to the well-being of society, they deserve a separate consideration. With regard to a peaceable disposition, the want of it is not only an evil to society, but a great abatement, and sometimes the destruction of private happiness. A state of enmity with our fellow-creatures is so repugnant to nature, that it is painful to every mind which is not depraved and hardened by bad habits; and where the genuine feelings of humanity are extinguished or weakened, the usual effects of variance are reciprocal hatred and injury. It is a divine maxim of virtue and prudence; "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* Every disagreement and contention wounds the sensibility of a good heart, and aggravates the callousness of a

* Rom. xii. 18.

bad one. It is always an interruption of happiness: it is generally, more or less, a temptation to sin.

With respect to benevolence, or a desire to advance the welfare, and to mitigate the misfortunes of others; it is a disposition so congenial to our native sentiments, so suited to our situation as indigent and dependent creatures, so forcibly recommended by the Christian law, that it is needless to enlarge upon it as a duty; I speak of it here as a source of pleasure. St. Paul reports a saying of our blessed Lord, which is not recorded in the Gospels, but is highly agreeable to his divine character, and to his unlimited knowledge of the best feelings and interests of human nature: "Ye ought to support the weak: and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive;"* more blessed, not only in the grateful prayer of the indigent, and in the benediction of heaven, but in the dignity of the action, and in the conscious satisfaction of the heart. For, to receive is an act of necessity; to give is an act of choice: to receive, is to partake only of happiness; to give, is also to communicate it: to receive, is the condition of a creature; to give is the delegated power of the Creator; it is to gratify the noblest affections of the human nature, and to imitate the perfections of the divine. It is a well-known advantage of superior rank and fortune, that it enables men to draw from this source of delight and honour in copious and diffusive streams. It is a spur to activity and industry in the second orders of society, that as they increase in wealth, they will have a larger scope for virtue. It is an encouragement to the third, that benevolence may be active and useful without the aid of riches. There are numberless offices of kindness, which depend entirely upon a well disposed mind. And the happiness of families and other smaller circles, in every station, is completed by a goodness of temper and humanity of heart, when the advantages of affluence, and even many substantial virtues, would, without these social qualities, have contributed in vain.

* Acts, xx. 35.

Fifthly. I mention one more qualification for temporal happiness, a cheerful and contented mind; a disposition to enjoy the blessings of the present hour; to suffer, without repining; to hope, as far as may be, without anxiety. This temper will chiefly arise from a due consideration of the nature of this world; the shortness of our continuance in it; and our expectations in another. This world presents to us many reasonable enjoyments, not unworthy the attention of a wise and virtuous man: but while he receives them gratefully, as the gifts of heaven, he will consider them as transient imperfect pleasures: he will not expect from them that complete or lasting satisfaction, which, as he well knows, they are not intended to bestow. His meditation on the shortness and uncertainty of life will instruct him daily to contract his plans of happiness; to pass the present moment innocently, cheerfully, and usefully; and not to look forward continually to days which he may never see, for the enjoyment of his being, or for the exercise of his virtue. "This day," he will say, "I will be as good and as happy as I can; providing at the same time, by the rules of religion and prudence, for the goodness and happiness of to-morrow. I will enjoy the present, and prepare for the future." The contemplation of his eternal home will improve the amusements, and soften the inconveniences of his journey in every stage. As the day of life declines, he will in a less degree be affected by its pains and pleasures: and the nearer it approaches to the setting sun, the more steadily and earnestly will he extend his views beyond the narrow horizon of this sublunary world. Nature indeed, and habit, will attach him to this earth: friendship and affection will disincline him still more to leave it: but religion will reconcile him to his departure, and even render it an object of cheerful expectation. This heavenly guide, like some guardian angel, will display to his mental vision the glories of the spiritual world; point to the city of the living God, and to the mansions which his Saviour hath prepared for him; to the spirits of just men made perfect; to holy persons of all ages and countries, some of

them the dearest connexions and companions of his pilgrimage; to an innumerable company of angels; to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant; to God, the Judge of all men.* This prospect closes the scene of earthly hap-

S E R M O N C L I.

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On Sickness.

JOB ii. 10.

He said unto her, what? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?

THE propriety of this question does not immediately appear upon a bare consideration of the divine attributes. We know that God is infinite in all perfections; benevolence is a part of his transcendent nature; it is abundantly displayed in the works of his creation, and the proceedings of his providence. His creatures therefore, when they contemplate this eternal source of good, seem to have little reason to apprehend that evil can flow from it. When they consider the gracious power which fashioned and preserves them, they have grounds of confidence in the continuance of his bounty. If we look up to beings of a nature superior to our own, we are instructed to believe that they enjoy uninterrupted happiness. If we view man at his creation, we find him in a state of perfection. And when God surveyed his other works, he saw that they were good. From a being essentially benevolent, so gracious in his dispensations, so bountiful to his creatures, why may we not receive and hope for good, without the apprehension of evil?

To solve this difficulty, we have only to carry our thoughts from the attributes and acts of the Creator, to the moral con-

duct of the creature. We know what brought evil into the world, and what continues it there. The benevolence of God would have for ever shut it out from his creation; but the abuse of free-will in the first parents, drew it from his justice. Their posterity have inherited the sentence passed upon their transgression, the mortal children of mortal parents. They have inherited also the moral corruption of their nature, they imitate them in their disobedience; which is at once an argument that they are partakers of a fallen nature, and is also a personal demerit incurring the divine pleasure. The evil of punishment necessarily followed the evil of sin: and thus, what never would have proceeded from a gracious and benevolent Creator, we are taught to receive, with patience and humility, from the hand of a righteous moral governor. Hence human life is a mixture of pain and pleasure: the bounty of God, unwearied and inexhaustible, affords to it many comforts and blessings; intermingled, however, with plain marks of his justice: for a display of his goodness, ample and unlimited, we are instructed upon equitable conditions to look forward to another state.

The evils which this holy person suffered when he offered this meek and just expostulation were three, the most afflicting to human nature: a sudden fall from worldly prosperity; the decease of his nearest relatives; and the anguish of a loathsome sickness. The first of these, the loss of wealth, may be borne by considerate and religious persons with an equal mind: it may be repaired or relieved by industry and activity; by generous friendship; by providential dispositions, or natural vicissitudes, of things: at the worst, they may find, by a consoling experience, that the real necessities and comforts of life lie within a narrower compass than they once imagined. The second, the death of friends is a severe trial to the native sensibility of the human heart. Mutual good offices, long habit, religious principles, increase the warmth and constancy of natural affection, and proportionably aggravate the pain of separation. If the past intercourse hath been laudable and affection-

* John, xiv. 2. Heb. xii. 22—24.

etc, the heart of the survivor is more tender, and the regret more forcible. If either party hath failed in duty, the errors of the departed friend are viewed with candour and partiality; while the faults of the survivor pierce him with regret, and afflict him with unavailing penitence. On every supposition it is a great calamity; and it falls most heavily upon the most worthy and generous minds. However, the kindness of Providence hath supplied a healing quality to these wounds of the mind, as it hath to those of the body. Reason suggests, that separation is the unavoidable consequence of a mortal condition: that the order of the world requires, that we should enter it and leave it in succession; handing down to those who follow us the principles of religion and the arts of life: and consolatory topics of a higher order spring from the enlightened contemplation of a future state. The incidents and engagements of life divert the attention from a melancholy theme. Time, though it do not diminish our good opinion, or abate our affection, yet it weakens the recollection, and softens the impression. Habit, as it once enhanced the value of possession, so does it gradually reconcile us to the loss. And thus the mind is by natural means, and by the divine blessing, restored to tranquillity at least, and frequently to happiness.

The Third calamity, the loss of health, involves in some measure the evils of the other two; and adds many severe ones of its own. In this afflicting situation, a competent fortune is indeed, in one respect, of considerable importance, as it affords in a more ample manner the aid of science and all external accommodation; alleviating the disorder, and often leading to the removal. But for every other comfort, and for every enjoyment, the bed of sickness, like the grave which follows it, levels all distinction between the rich and the poor. So far as a mind oppressed by a distempered body can receive consolation from society, nothing can sooth, it equally with the attention, the duty, the affection, of friends and relatives. But how little of enjoyment, how much of suffering, from the sympathy of those who are dear to you? when

the natural desire of life and health is increased by the recollection of past happiness, by the thoughts of a separation, perhaps by a reasonable anxiety for their future welfare? Thus does the loss of health abate or destroy the relish of other blessings. Its own evils, the privations and sufferings attending it, are great and many. All sensible enjoyment, having the body for its seat and vehicle, must depend entirely on the due order of this curious and frail machine. In proportion as its parts or movements are injured or deranged, the genial feelings and activity of health give way to pain, and languor, and weariness. The gratifications which the bounty of the Creator hath indulged to it, become insipid, or even disgusting. As to intellectual pleasures, the material organ being distempered and obstructed, the mind loses her free communication with external nature, and seems deprived even of her own native energy. "The eye no longer delights her with seeing, nor the ear with hearing:"* conversation is perplexing and oppressive: meditation is clouded and confused. Her operations, depending in this present state of union with a body upon a wonderful contexture, temperament, and action of matter, shall sometimes subside into idiotism, at others shall be wound up to a delirium. A strong and cultivated understanding shall lose all the resources of inventive genius, and be despoiled of the precious stores of memory: and the immortal spirit of man, overwhelmed in the ruins of this earthly prison, shall scarce show a remaining faculty equal to the instinct of a brute. Add to this, that in every evil of life it is the mind alone that can afford support and consolation: "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity."† Now in other calamities, death of friends, poverty, slander, persecution; the mind, if conscious of integrity, calls in her ample and powerful resources; and recollects every lesson of wisdom and prudence which may instruct her to cure, to mitigate, or to suffer. But in sickness, the arrow which assails the body pierces also its ally; it wounds the

* Eccl. i. 8.

† Prov. xviii. 14.

immortal guardian,* who should shield it in the hour of danger. The mind, in this state of debility, is less able to represent to herself, with force and perspicuity, the arguments of reason and the promises of religion. In proportion as her activity is weakened, she bears up less firmly against the present evil: as her operations are disordered, and her views obstructed, she sees less distinctly, and with smaller impression, the future good. Though sometimes she cheer herself with the prospect of better days on earth, though at others she raise herself to the contemplation of heavenly scenes; yet still "the corruptible body presseth her down"† continually, and recallevh her attention to its infirmities. Extremity of pain is succeeded by languid and imperfect ease; and the hours which she hath now learned to value, and would wish to employ, move on so heavily and so unprofitably, that she is tempted, in the expressive language of the Prophetic Lawgiver, to "say in the morning, would God it were even, and at even, would God it were morning."‡ These natural causes of distress may be aggravated by moral and spiritual considerations. The sick person, suspended, perhaps suddenly, in his course, may be apt to entertain a doubt whether he has proceeded hitherto with caution and diligence, proportioned to the light and strength which he has enjoyed. His errors may be great and many; or his present weakness may enlarge or multiply them to his view. His habitual piety and humility may impress him with too keen a sense of his imperfections: or he may have lamentable cause of remorse and apprehension in the recollection of an ill-spent life.

What then will be the probable reflexions of a reasonable and considerate person in the beginning of sickness? It is an inquiry universally interesting: many have experienced the situation, and all may expect it: perhaps it is in some degree the wish of all; for if with propriety we pray against sudden death, it

is because we consider the hour of sickness as a season of recollection and preparation, which Christian humility hath taught us to esteem a blessing. If the representation which I shall lay before you appear to correspond with reason and experience, the application will be obvious; for it is a plain rule of prudence, so to act to-day, as I shall wish I had acted, to-morrow; it is a striking lesson of religious wisdom, so to form our sentiments and manners in the days of youth and health, that they may afford us agreeable recollections in age and sickness, and pleasing expectations of a life to come.

The first consideration which offers itself to a sick person is mortality; the immediate prospect of that great revolution which shall remove him into another world. This important object, which always presents itself when we look down the short vista of human life, is then brought nearer to the eye: and though neither reason nor imagination can paint distinctly the scene which lies beyond it, yet of its general nature and complexion, he may form a probable conjecture: whether it shall be light or darkness; happiness or misery. He knows that the determination of this point depends upon the pleasure of his Creator; and that it will be adjusted in equitable proportion to the moral conduct of his life. His guide was the reason which God had given him; the distinguishing faculty of his nature, which renders him accountable; capable of virtue and vice; subject to reward and punishment. "How then (he will ask himself) have I employed this gift of Heaven? Have I applied it faithfully to that great and interesting inquiry, what is the will of God? what are the means of being accepted by him? If I have fancied, that these things are discoverable by my reason, without any communications from himself, have I so found them? Alas! no. If God has been pleased to assist my reason, to instruct me by a Revelation of his will, have I received this Revelation with reverence, gratitude, and obedience? I have not surely neglected to inquire into its evidence? I have not shut my eyes against

* Iliad v. 335. † Wisdom ix. 15.

‡ Deut. xxviii. 67.

the light which presented itself? I have not refused to listen to the voice of my Creator, presumptuously rejecting the terms of mercy which he offers, and vainly framing to myself other conditions of his favour? If the pride of my heart has thus blinded me; if the corruption of my manners hath seduced my understanding; if education, or company, or books, have drawn me into these fatal errors; if the love of singularity hath perverted my reason, or habitual indolence hath destroyed its activity; let me pray to God to recal me from my wanderings! to give me time and ability to correct my errors, and to amend my faults! For how shall I appear before him, remembering the talent which I have abused, the instructions which I have disdained to hear, the mercy which I have rejected, and the laws which I have disobeyed?

If he has received with reverence the revelations of Heaven, he will consider whether he has sincerely and diligently attended to them: whether he has weighed impartially the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel: whether he has formed his sentiments and manners upon his faith; or laboured to adapt his faith to his own preconceived opinions or erroneous conduct. As the will of God is the measure of moral obligation, and the adequate rule of human life, so the holy scriptures are the authentic promulgation of his will. If therefore in the regulating of our manners we do not appeal to them, or if we interpret them partially, what is this but to act in contradiction to our convictions and professions? If a fashionable crime, or a favourite passion, is to be justified upon general arguments of honour, necessity, or frailty, when the scriptures have laid down other measures of duty, and marked with precision the boundary between right and wrong, this is plainly to set up conjecture against demonstration, and inclination against law. Or, if we admit the precepts of the Gospel in their full extent, but narrow the sanction and dispute the punishment, this is a continuation of the same fatal error. In each case we are beguiled by the ancient sophistry of the great Deceiver "hath God" really "said ye shall not eat of

every tree of the garden? Ye shall not surely die."* These palpable fallacies, however they may pass in the hour of health and dissipation, will not satisfy the serious inquiries of a sick man. Impressed with a lively sense of the truths and blessings of the Gospel, he will put these important questions to his heart. "Have my reverence of the Supreme Being, and my desire to please him, been suitable to the high advantages which I have enjoyed, in the clear discovery of his attributes, in the revelation of his mercies, and the publication of his will? Have my thanksgivings expressed my gratitude to the Author and Preserver of my being? have my supplications acknowledged my dependence upon the Governor of the universe? Have I thought of him continually with filial duty; with love and fear; with a confidence in his goodness; with an awe of his holiness and justice? Have I spoken of him with reverence proportioned to his transcendent nature? with the profound veneration due from a creature to his Creator? or have I called upon his sacred name with levity and profaneness? debasing my conversation with impiety? meanly condescending to imitate the language of ignorant idolaters, presuming to treat the name of the most High God with the same contemptuous familiarity, which they shewed to fabulous deities and departed heroes?† Hath my piety to God laid the foundation of my charity to man? Have I loved my fellow-creatures, as objects of the divine bounty, and as partakers with me of one common nature? Have I obeyed the best feelings of my heart, the dictates of my reason, and the prospects of my religion, in desiring universal happiness, in promoting it to the extent of my ability and influence? Have I visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction? have I pitied the evils of poverty and the infirmities of age? have I administered consolation to those pains and sorrows, which are now become my own? Hath my self-government been agreeable to the purity of the Christian

* Gen. iii. 1, 4.
Ecclesiast., &c.

† Nu. dia, Mehercule,

law? proportioned to the instruction which it affords, and to the grace which it offers? Have I judged it unworthy of an enlightened mind to be the slave of sense and passion? and ill suited to a generous spirit of humanity, to disturb the order of society, and to assail the virtue and happiness of others?"

If these inquiries end to his satisfaction, sickness will receive great alleviation, and death will be divested of half its terrors. He will look back upon the pleasures and pursuits of life, with a regret indeed which is natural: but with a complete conviction of their vanity, and insufficiency to happiness; with a faint desire, if any, to repeat them. He will say perhaps with a wise man of antiquity, "if I might change this bed of sickness for my cradle, and again run the course of life from infancy to age, I would earnestly decline the offer."* He will reflect upon the goodness of the Creator, which formed him in the womb; and one day called him from a state of darkness and insensibility, to the enjoyment of a reasonable nature, and to the satisfactions of this visible world: he will therefore rely with confidence on his indulgent providence in the changes which may still await him, and in such other scenes as may open to his sight. He will imagine the amazement and delight with which he would have beheld the wonders of this material universe, if he had entered it, like the first parent, in a state of maturity, in the full vigour of his senses and understanding. Not less, he may presume, will be his admiration and rapture, when this veil of flesh shall suddenly be removed, and the world of spirits shall be presented to his view. He will recollect the mercies of the Redeemer, who hath assured him that "in his father's house are many mansions," and that "he hath prepared a place" for his disciples.† He will consider that he is removing from a scene of pilgrimage, by a path which millions have used before him: that he is passing from the few to the many; from mortals struggling with natural and moral infirmity, to "the spirits of just men made

perfect:"‡ that he is going to the wise and good of every age; to those whom history hath taught him to admire, and whom personal acquaintance hath endeared to him: that he shall be admitted to the society of natures superior to his own; of whom, though little is revealed, he reads in the page of Scripture this engaging character,—perfect obedience to the Creator, and benevolence to the human race.

In this situation, he is prepared to obey the call of Providence, whithersoever it may lead him. He hath "committed his soul to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."§ "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."||

It may indeed be the pleasure of God to continue him long in this state of infirmity; to exercise his suffering virtues; to improve his moral character; and to increase his reward. Or it may be the design of Providence, after this solemn warning, this gracious correction and admonition, to recal him for a season to the duties of active life; to restore him for a few months or years to health and strength, and to grant him the opportunity and ability of testifying his reverence of the supreme Creator and Disposer, by a more punctual conformity to his will. If such should be the destination of Heaven, I need not inquire what will be his religious feelings and resolutions, on this his resurrection from the bed of sickness. From a situation thus deeply affecting every interest of his nature, so distressing to his corporal frame, so trying to his mental faculties, so nearly decisive of his everlasting fate; from such a situation, he will arise with a lively apprehension of the Divine goodness, and renewed vows of reverence and obedience. He will come forth out of the chamber of pain and weariness; he will pass from a scene of gloominess and anxiety; he will look out once more upon the cheerful face of nature;¶ and will probably address himself to Heaven in some such meditation as this.

† Heb. xii. 23.

|| Luke ii. 29.

§ 1 Pet. iv. 14.

¶ See Akenside's *Pl.* of

Imag. ll. 88—96. First Edit.

‡ K 2

* Cic. de Senect. 23.

† John xiv. 2.

"Blessed Author and Preserver of my being, I humbly praise thee, that thou art pleased to restore me to the sight of this material universe, to the enjoyment of my senses and understanding, and to the duties and comforts of life. Give me grace to dedicate to thy service the residue of my years. May a sense of thy experienced goodness increase my piety to thee, and my benevolence to thy creatures. Teach me to employ the faculties which thou hast once more given me, in promoting the designs of thy providence; my own well-being, and the happiness of mankind. May the uncertainty of life and health instruct me in the proper use of them: to improve my moral nature under the assistance of thy Spirit, and to obtain thy favour through the mediation of thy Son. Though, in thy wisdom and goodness, thou hast been pleased to bring back the "shadow of the dial, by so many degrees as it had" rapidly "gone down,"* let me remember that the sun still pursues his course; "the day is gradually declining; the shadows of the evening are already stretched out."† Prepare me continually for that awful change, which, though suspended by thy good pleasure, is yet approaching. And so conduct us all by thy grace and providence through this state of trial and infirmity, that our life may be comfortable, our death happy, our resurrection glorious."

SERMON CLII.

By JOHN NAPLETON, D.D.

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Approach towards Perfection.

PHILIP iii. 12.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after—.

WHEN we contemplate the visible universe, one of the earliest subjects of our admiration is the unbounded variety of form and quality, with which it hath

pleased the Creator to diversify his works: and a distinguishing character of this variety is, that it is not an accumulation confused and indigested, but a series orderly and progressive; carried by regular advances through species and kinds innumerable. In things inanimate upon this our globe, there is a continued gradation of apparent utility, beauty, and magnitude. There is a similar variety in the planetary bodies; in their size, in the length of their periods, and in their distance from the fountain of light and heat. There is a like order, proportion, and system, in the vegetable world. In the animal creation the process is more conspicuous: whether we trace it by the size of the body, by its strength, by its activity, or lastly and more particularly by the vigour and compass of instinct, from the first degree, which scarcely exceeds vegetation, to the last, which borders upon reason. From this methodical diversity which we see in the material world, we are led to suppose it not improbable, that the same procedure may prevail in the world of spirits. In this conjecture we are so far supported by the testimony of sacred history, as to be informed that there is one kind of intelligent creatures, superior to ourselves. Two orders therefore of spirits exist assuredly, angelic and human. We read of angels and archangels: whether these are distinguished by natural constitution and endowment, or only by office and employment, we are not instructed. What divisions there may be of angelic natures; what other spiritual existences there may be above us, or what below us; we are entirely ignorant. We know indeed that the power and goodness of the Creator is unbounded: we find a gradation and proportion in these his works which we see: we may imagine that they bear some analogy to others which we do not see: it is possible, therefore, that there may be a series of reasonable beings, approaching nearer and nearer, though at a removal infinite, to the fountain of existence. But these are questions which reason cannot reach, and which revelation hath not resolved.

The various forms, endowments, and progressions, of material things, whether inanimate, vegetable, or animal, are the

* Isaiah xxxviii. 8.

† Jorem. vi. 4.

immediate work of the Creator, marked out by the sovereign "counsel of his will:" which hath assigned to each kind its own station and quality, and separated it from its neighbour by boundaries which no effort of its own can pass. Whatever changes matter may undergo from one manner of being to another, from unorganized to vegetable, from vegetable to animal; whatever revolutions may affect the animal body, from health and vigour to infirmity and dissolution; these migrations and alterations are executed by the settled order of nature, prescribed by the supreme Artificer, and imposed upon the creature by a law irresistible. But when we rise to the contemplation of a Being like ourselves, in which is added to the material and animal substance, a spirit rational and free, the procedure is far otherwise. Our material part, like all other animals, grows up to maturity, decays, and is dissolved. It has no powers to better its condition, or to preserve itself from growing worse. But the intellectual and moral part of us has a choice and action of its own, upon which depends the degree of its well-being; it has, inherent in its constitution, the power of approaching nearer to perfection, or receding further from it: inasmuch as its perfection is a willing conformity to the proper law of its nature; it is the choice and practice of virtue; it is a desire to imitate the divine attributes; it is a voluntary submission to the will of God. A creature reasonable and free is so far, and in such proportion, perfect, as he useth his understanding successfully in finding out what is right, and as he exerciseth his freedom effectually in choosing and following it. We see then what is the standard of Human Perfection; whether we call it a life of reason or religion; whether we give it the name of virtue or piety; (in different views either appellation may strictly apply;) it is ultimately obedience and resignation to the will and dispensations of God. As man had greatly fallen short of this measure, knowing the divine will imperfectly, and still more imperfectly per-

forming it, God was pleased to promise in the early ages, and to send in his appointed time, a Teacher and Saviour: a Teacher to instruct and guide him in the way of perfection; a Saviour to encourage him in it, by obtaining for him pardon in the beginning, assistance in his course, and eternal happiness in the end.

As the disciple of Christ is well acquainted with the nature of perfection, so is he instructed in the means of approaching towards it. He knows indeed that, though the means are certain, and the approach infallible, the attainment is, in this world at least, impossible. But this consideration, far from a discouragement, is a fresh incitement, to perseverance and activity. Every advance towards perfection is an improvement of his nature; and a motive not to content himself with any degree of goodness, which he may have already attained. He will not be satisfied with the habitual exercise of any particular virtue, or the occasional practice of all. Uniform perseverance and continual improvement will be his aim. The argument for this plan of conduct is clear and irresistible.

First, It may be presumed that every reasonable creature has originally a propensity to enquire after, and to practise, that which is right. It is the exercise of the faculty, and the law of its nature. Though the faculty be weakened by any lapse or corruption; though it sometimes err in its decisions, or be diverted from executing them; yet still, so far as those disorders are remedied or abated, it pursues its native tendencies. This is our case. We are in a state of degeneracy and imperfection. We discern our duty, not without a mixture of error. We perform it with great deficiency. The revelations of heaven are given us to correct our errors, and the Holy Spirit to aid our infirmities. Directed and strengthened by these divine assistances, our native love of truth and virtue leads us to various degrees of goodness. If we suffer it to pursue its tendency, it will carry us to higher and higher: to stop it in its progress is to offer it equal violence, as to keep it down in its beginning; with this aggravation, that it

was strengthened by exercise. So that every argument in favour of virtue, drawn from the reasonableness of it, that is, from its conformity to the dictates of our understanding, enlightened and assisted by revelation, impels us with equal or increasing force, to the first good resolution and successful effort, to every degree of improvement, and to every further advance towards perfection. It is a contradiction to reason "not to have known" and entered "the way of truth;" it is a greater contradiction, "after we have known"* and walked in it, not to pursue it with growing diligence and activity to the end.

Secondly, Though virtue must ever approve itself to us as conformable to the suggestions of our reason, yet the real ground of its obligation is the reverence due to the Creator, who hath given us our reason; who hath impressed these sentiments upon it; who hath confirmed them by communications from himself; and therefore, in both these ways, hath published the laws of virtue, as the dictates of his sovereign and gracious will. It is our reverence to his authority, our deep sense of his goodness, our veneration for his holiness, our desire to please him, our anxiety to obtain his favour and protection in every stage and period of the being which he hath given us;—it is all these combined considerations, (for though they may be viewed distinctly, they cannot actually be separated) which make up the essence of moral obligation, and bind us down to the observance of every duty. Now these considerations affect us in every instance, and every degree, of piety. They concern the repenting sinner, and the happier "just person who needeth" little "repentance."† They influence the good man on earth, and the saint in heaven. The only difference in these situations is this: the longer and the more diligently you have walked in the way of religion, by so much the more deeply rooted, and the more present to your mind, is your reverence and gratitude to the all-perfect Author of your being; the more lively and incessant is

your desire to please him; the more earnest is your expectation, and the more encouraging your hope, to obtain his eternal favour. Your past progress in obedience incites and enables you to advance still further: and every distinct contemplation of the divine attributes, which moved you to begin a religious life, presents to your reason and affections, with greater force, your obligation to carry it on towards perfection. We can form no conception of any rational creature, who may not go on improving to all eternity: as for ourselves, every one can bear authentic testimony to the present imperfection of his own religious obedience; and to the capacity which he feels, under the grace of God, to correct and improve it. Religious obligation is like that powerful gravitating energy,* spread through the material world, which acts incessantly on every portion and particle; and draws it, with an increasing force, towards one point in the system. Religious obligation in like manner presses incessantly on every part of the rational creation, whatever be its endowment, native or acquired; still soliciting it to higher degrees of moral excellence, and drawing it, with a like increasing force, to a nearer approach to the centre of perfection. We may indeed, having freedom of choice and action, resist the impulse, divert its tendency, fly off from the prescribed orbit, or move languidly and slowly in it: but in proportion as we do so, we refuse obedience to the Author of universal nature; we degrade ourselves from the station in which he hath placed us: we renounce our expectation of such higher allotments as he destines to us. As therefore the love of virtue will not suffer the reasonable mind to be completely satisfied with any attainment whatever; so ~~with~~ the love of God more forcibly constrain us to make daily advances in religious obedience, as a continued and increasing testimony of our reverence to his nature, our grateful sense of his favours, and our dependence upon his providence.

Thirdly, It is not easy to preserve any habit, moral or intellectual, if we do not improve it. Habits are very rarely stationary: they either strengthen by

* 2 Pet. ii. 21.

† Luke xv. 7.

exercise, or weaken by disuse. This is an awful consideration, when applied to habits of religion. To perceive that I have less respect for the dictates of my reason, and follow them with less willingness or activity, now, than at a former period, is a mortifying and degrading reflection! To be conscious that I feel less reverence for my Creator, and offer less lively and punctual obedience to his laws, is a debasing and a dreadful thought! And yet this retrogradation in virtue and piety, in every quality honourable to our nature and indispensable to our happiness, is a probable, I had almost said, a certain, consequence of making no progression. Daily improvement, therefore, in piety is not only necessary as an act of duty, but expedient as a measure of security. If we do not proceed in this spiritual building, it may waste and crumble to its base, even "though it were founded upon a rock." As a human work, it is by nature perishable: the divine co-operation may be judicially suspended: and "the rain and the winds may beat upon it."*

Fourthly, We have seen that a life of virtue has two recommendations: the one, that it is conformable to the dictates of our minds; the other, concurring, and far more powerful, that it is the declared will of God: both considerations moving us to begin, to persevere, to suffer no hazardous intermission, to go on towards perfection. To these there is a third recommendation added by the free gift of God; the promise of an everlasting reward. We may venture to pronounce from our own feelings and the reason of the thing, that the desire of well being is inseparable from being: that nothing can exist, and not wish, in the way suited to its nature, to be happy. We may suppose, further, that every rational creature in the universe will, in the end and on the whole, be happy or miserable, in proportion to his degree of virtue or vice. Probably this would be a natural effect, resulting from the established order of things; we may conclude that it will be the decision of a

righteous governor: the tenour of scripture confirms this conclusion with respect to ourselves. If therefore you aspire at the highest possible degree of felicity, you will aim at the highest attainable degree of goodness.

Thus do your love of virtue, your reverence of the Deity, and your care of good, impel you to proceed. The path of duty and happiness, in which you are walking, hath no termination: the prospect before you is unbounded: every step you take increases your ability, and your inducement, to go on: until at length your faculties will be so strengthened, and your affections so determined, that under the heavenly light and guidance which you enjoy, it will be very improbable that, even in this state of trial and infirmity, you should stand still or go backward. The day will come when all the hazards of your earthly journey will be past: when, by final continuance in an accepted obedience, "you will have made your calling and election sure."† You are instructed to hope that, in the next period of your existence, you will be, as we suppose of the blessed angels, in a state of confirmed virtue: that either by so clear a view of truth and good, as shall preclude all possibility of error and mischoice, or by an abundant effusion of grace, or by some other means unknown, your perseverance will be made as certain as your reward.

SERMON CLIII.

By JOHN NAPLETON, D.D.

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On Consolation.

1 THESS. iv. 18.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

To comfort is to lessen the sense of an evil which you feel or fear, by the con-

* Matth. vii. 24, 27.

† 2 Peter i. 10.

sideration of some present, or approaching, good : which good may either be, in all reasonable estimation, some balance to the evil suffered or apprehended, or may in fact diminish or remove it. Arguments of comfort may be raised in different methods and on various grounds ; but this must be the foundation of them all ; the possession or expectation of some good, which may countervail, or mitigate, or take away, the evil : and to lead the mind to the contemplation of this good, to divert its attention from any cause of pain to some source of pleasure, and thus to teach it to suffer less, and to enjoy more, this is comfort. Comfort then is adapted to a reasonable being, who is subject to a mixture and alternation of good and evil ; who has his pleasures and pains : his hopes and fears. It is therefore suited to man in his present state. To an angel, or a saint in heaven, whom we believe to be free from the suffering or the dread of evil, consolation would be superfluous : for there is no pain, or fear of pain, to lessen or remove.* To a fallen spirit, or an unpardoned sinner departed, whose condition we believe to be desperate misery, Consolation would be impossible : for there is no pleasure, or hope of pleasure, to hold forth. But to us in this middle state of being, placed in a mixed and variable scene, passing through a perpetual circulation of good and evil, and agitated by endless revolutions of hope and fear, consolation is the one acceptable, and practicable, offer. He who should either bid us be completely happy, or consign us to unmingled and incurable misery, would betray either an ignorance of our situation, or a malicious desire to mislead us. These therefore are commonly the short-lived illusions of our own imaginations, or the persevering arts of the great deceiver. In youth, health, and prosperity, our hopes are likely to be extravagant ; in age, sickness, and adversity, our fears are apt to be excessive. In each case the insidious tempter aims to take advantage of the frailty of our nature, and to confirm us in our errors ; at one time raising us to the lofty " mountain, and shewing us all the kingdoms of the world

and the glory of them ;"† at another, following us into the garden of affliction,† presenting to us a bitter foretaste of the cup of sorrow, and aggravating the horror of impending evil. But the holy scriptures, dictated by that all-seeing and gracious spirit, who knows our condition and destination, and condescends to correct our errors, and " to help our infirmities,"‡ make no representation which is not conformable to truth and fact : they give us no precept or exhortation, which is not suited to our situation and prospects. They describe our nature, as we feel it ; and the world, as we find it. They paint no present scene of perfect enjoyment, such as the goodness of God may be imagined to have granted to his creatures in a state of innocence : nor any present scene of hopeless suffering, such as may be the result of his justice in a final state of unexpiated sin. They prescribe no insensibility to pain or pleasure. They suppose not any entire exclusion of either. They point out the genuine sources of both ; and the causes, original and accessory, of their increase or diminution. And representing it as the gracious design of the Creator, that pleasure shall ultimately prevail, even to the complete and perpetual banishment of pain, they instruct us how to add continually to the scale which shall at length preponderate. They teach us not only to prevent, or diminish, the impending or present evil ; but also to abate its influence on the mind, by a wise application, and a prudent anticipation, of the present or future good. Thus exhibiting the Supreme Being in every view of ourselves, and in all his dispensations towards us, as the object of our dutiful affection and humble gratitude ; in our faculties and enjoyments, as the author of " every perfect gift ;"§ in our defects and sufferings, as " the God of all consolation."||

The evils incident to our original nature and present condition, and the

* Matth. iv. 8.

† Rom. viii. 26.

|| Rom. xv. 3.

† Matth. xxvi. 26.

§ James i. 17.

goods by which they are largely balanced, and will one day be completely remedied, may be briefly digested into the following particulars.

Our first reflexion upon ourselves suggests to us that we are creatures; contingent beings, which might never have existed, began to exist as yesterday, and may cease to exist to-morrow. Annihilation is an object of dread to every creature conscious of its being, whether endowed with instinct only, or with reason also. Instinct flies its approaches: reason contemplates it afar with horror. What then has man, a reasonable, a thinking, creature, to console him under this anxious uncertainty, naturally inseparable from the condition of his being?—He hopes that He who made him will preserve him. He trusts that the attributes which moved the Creator to call him out of nothing, will disincline him to reverse his bounty, to undo his own acts, and to reduce him to nothing again. This expectation is strengthened by the consideration of the spiritual part of him, framed, as it should seem, for long duration, high attainments, and solid enjoyments. It is further confirmed when he views himself as a moral agent, an object of reward and punishment; the due distribution of which appears to require a protracted existence. These arguments amount to a high probability, that his being will be continued to an endless period. But they do not satisfy his natural aspirations: they do not calm his unceasing apprehensions. They are, however, all that uninstructed reason can offer.

Our second reflexion upon ourselves reminds us that we are mortal creatures. Although we should be permitted to exist for ever, we shall not long continue in this present form of being: and we know not what other form awaits us; whether better or worse than the present; whether fixed or changeable. The apprehended evil is certain; namely, the dissolution of our compound nature; a separation from this visible world, from all that is in it, pleasant to our senses, entertaining to our understandings, dear to our affections. Now what consolation have we to meet us in the distant, or the nearer,

view of this awful crisis?—Here again we rely upon the goodness of the Creator, that, if he be pleased to continue our being in some other state, he will not withdraw his bounty in its modification: that he will give us faculties and objects of enjoyment, equal at least, perhaps superior, to those which he hath granted hitherto. Every preceding argument for the continuance of our existence, suggests a hope of its improvement, if not prevented by our misconduct. Yet the whole series hangs only on a strong probability. It depends on the pleasure of the Supreme Being, whose perfections are infinite, but “his judgments are unsearchable. For who hath known his mind” concerning us, “or who hath been his counsellor?”* The smallest of his gifts deserves our reverent thanksgiving: and there is none so great that may not be the object of our hope: but this hope requires, for its confirmation, a knowledge of his will.

Our third reflexion upon ourselves admonishes us that we are sinful creatures; who, by disobedience to the Creator have weakened our reliance upon his goodness, and have lamentable cause to apprehend his justice. Whether, or to what extent, he will be pleased to pardon our disobedience; if he do not pardon it, in what manner or degree he will punish it; whether by the extinction of our being at some unknown period, or by the continuation of it in some less pleasurable, or even painful, state; these are questions which no unenlightened view of his attributes, no calculations of unassisted reason, can resolve. We feel at present many infirmities of mind and body, which seem to be the necessary effect, or judicial punishment, of our faults. This experience shows us an established connexion between natural and moral evil. We cannot ascertain how far, or how long, in what way, or with what aggravation, this connexion may hereafter affect our happiness.

This seems to be a just picture of the natural state of man, as seen by the lamp of reason: a fair representation of his

* Rom. xi. 33, 34.

evils and his comforts, as they appear without a revelation: a scene like the chaos, wherein the rays of light were so entangled with the opaque elements, that "darkness was upon the face of the deep; until God said, let there be light, and divided the light from the darkness."* But when we look into the authentic history of man, we find that the all-gracious Creator did from the beginning enlighten his understanding and cheer his prospects; and hath from time to time afforded him consolation suited to every evil of his condition.

Is he, as a creature, liable to an extinction of his being? is he, as a reasonable creature, conscious of this liability?—No sooner had the Creator "breathed into him the breath of life,"† than he gave him a conditional promise of continuance in it, implied by the sanction of the prohibitory law: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die."‡ And when, after his transgression, the sentence of mortality was pronounced upon him, the intimation of a Redeemer signified the preservation of his being. Thus did he receive by an early revelation, an assurance which his reason never could have given him: and he was guarded against the fear of annihilation, before he had time to contemplate his danger. Every subsequent communication from heaven confirmed his security: teaching him that his hope of a continued existence is not ill founded, whether drawn from the benevolence of the Creator, or from the nature and endowments of the creature: until at length the promised Saviour, by a larger discovery of the divine counsels, "brought life and immortality to" the meridian "light,"§ which his disciples now enjoy.

Are we mortal creatures? subject to a dissolution of our compound nature, an extinction of our animal frame, and a removal from this visible world?—We are assured by revelation, that, if we conform to the prescribed conditions, our spiritual part will pass immediately into a better state; that it will one day

be restored to its primeval union with a body; and will enjoy satisfactions suited to its faculties, inconceivable in extent, and endless in duration.

Are we sinful creatures? prone to imitate the disobedience of our first progenitor? unable therefore to rely with confidence on the goodness of God; because we cannot exclude the consideration of his justice?—Revelation hath calmed these well-grounded fears of reason; discovering the stupendous mediation, by which the goodness of God is conciliated with his justice, and displayed in the gracious attribute of mercy. It consoles the repenting sinner with the offer of pardon. It invite him to a renewed obedience by the promise of present aid and final acceptance. It soothes him under every effect, experienced or apprehended, of moral evil, by the prospect of scenes wherein it will exist no more. It shows him the path which leads to them, and affords him light and strength to walk in it.

This revelation has been delivered by messengers, who proved their delegation from God, by communications of his infinite power and knowledge in miracles and prophecy. These attestations, exhibited in a variety of times and manners, have been recorded from age to age: and are come down to us with such a correspondence and accumulation of evidence, with such harmonious diversity of testimony, such universal marks of certainty, that we are bound, in reverence to "the Father of Spirits,"|| to believe what he hath ordained to appear to us, his reasonable creatures, under every impress and criterion of truth. We rely upon his goodness that he will accept the homage of our faith and obedience, when all the inquiries and deductions of our understanding terminate in this sure conclusion, "this true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."¶

This then is the actual state of man instructed as he is, and assisted, by revelation. He no longer fears the extinction of his being, which the sove-

* Gen. i. 2, 3, 4.
Gen. ii. 17.

† Gen. i. 7.
‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.

|| Heb. xii. 9.

¶ 1 Tim. i. 15.

reign donor, in his original designation, and merciful restoration, hath made "to be the image of his own eternity*."

He awaits with firmness the dissolution of his body, being assured that his spirit will survive in some better state, adapted to its nature; and will one day be united with its material vehicle, "fearfully and wonderfully"†, re-made, spiritualized and glorified, in a manner past all inquiry and conception, by him to whom all creation is subject, and all things are possible. He no longer trembles at the consciousness of his disobedience, having the assurance of mercy: nor is he discouraged by a sense of his infirmity, having a promise of grace. He will say with an humble rapture, "Blessed be God, who hath given me a reasonable nature, designed for an eternity of happiness. When it was fallen from innocence, he gave it the hope of pardon. When it became prone to sin, he gave it a capacity of offering an acceptable obedience. When it was dismembered by the infliction of his justice, he gave it the expectation of a renewed integrity. "He leadeth me then in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." Oh may I always obey his guidance! and then, "though I shall walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." I am persuaded that he who hath created, redeemed, and sanctified me; who sustaineth, blesseth, and comforteth me in this stage of my existence; will not forsake me in any other. "His kindness and mercy will follow me all the days of my" being, "and I shall dwell in the" presence "of the Lord for ever‡."

* Wisd. ii. 23.

† Ps. cxxxix. 14.

‡ See the beautiful Psalm xxiii.

S E R M O N C L I V .

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D. D.

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On receiving the Gospel with Meekness and Humility.

ST. JAMES i. 21.

Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

THE persons, whom the Apostle addresses in this Epistle, appear, through the prevalence of a most impious opinion, to have fallen into corrupt practices; and under the influence of vanity and presumption, to have refused paying that attention to the Gospel, which could be productive of right judgment and modest temper. With respect to their first error, we may observe, it has ever been a weakness natural to man, that he should impute the blame of committing a sinful action to any and every, but the right cause. Constitution, situation, condition, circumstances, all are brought forward as extenuations of guilt; nay, and though the object of religion is to promote benevolence, purity, and holiness, yet the very name of religion hath been frequently used as a cloak for the grossest enormities! But of such palliations, some are wicked and blasphemous; all are weak, false, and groundless.

God created man in a state of innocence: He implanted in him passions, the furtherance of his happiness: He gave the light of reason, and the direction of positive law, by which those passions should be governed: He forewarned him that the effect of disobedience to what reason and duty suggested, must be extreme misery: He made his mind susceptible of immediate apprehensions upon any danger of swerving from reason and duty. Man, nevertheless, suffered his passions to blind his reason, weaken his sense of duty, and allay, by subtle persuasions, the alarms of conscience. Under this infatuation man re-

belled against his Maker; he yielded himself a slave to sin and Satan, and thus worked his own woe!

In the fall of Adam, we not only see the original source of that depravity, which has since vitiated human nature, but we behold also an exact picture of what happens to ourselves. Inordinate affections, and ungovernable appetites, are the instruments by which the enemy of mankind seduces us from our duty. Affections and appetites are essential parts of our nature, interwoven in it for the purpose of increasing the enjoyments of the individual, and the comforts of social life. Reason and religion exhort us to restrain, within their due bounds, our inclinations and propensities: the experience of ages, no less than the Word of God, demonstrates to us that the consequence of intemperate and criminal indulgence must be bodily and spiritual misery: yet, like Adam, we allow our passions to mislead our reason and overcome our scruples; like him we transgress the commands of God, and render ourselves captives to the vilest of masters, our own lusts, and that fallen Spirit, whose malignant delight is to triumph over virtue, and seduce man from the love and obedience which are due to God!

As the most effectual method by which we may be rescued from the dominion of impetuous and imperious passions, we are admonished by the Apostle to "receive with meekness" the Gospel, "the engrafted Word."

And what should impede the reception of it? That by the profligate and abandoned the Gospel should be rejected, is nothing extraordinary: those, who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are abominably evil*," cannot be expected to embrace a system, which prohibits altogether their vicious actions. But the generality of men are not so entirely wicked as to be utterly reprobate: we commonly at least commend good actions, however little we practise them: we at least would be thought to have some religion, however negligent we are in observing the duties of it. What then

could hinder those, who can talk much of God and virtue, from embracing the Gospel, which conveys to us the most sublime ideas of God, which prescribes to us the most unexceptionable and most consummate rules of virtue; nay, and more than this, which confirms all the hopes, and dispels all the fears, that have ever been attached to human nature unenlightened by the Gospel? The impediment arises from a want of that meekness, which is necessary for the effectual reception of religious truths; our vanity and presumption disdain to hear attentively, and examine candidly, a plain recital of incontestable facts.

The persons, whom the Apostle St. James had in view, are directed to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*." An exhortation of this nature had not been requisite, were not the objects of it censurable for contrary conduct. Probably they belonged to that description of men, which first corrupted Christianity by idle speculations, tending rather to provoke disputes, than promote religion. A display of abilities, a shew of superior understanding, and the hope of attracting popular applause, might be the purposes for which they would obtrude their fanciful conceits: the simplicity of the Gospel was too humble for minds that aspired to the reputation of being uncommonly penetrating; they must therefore substitute their own conceptions in the place of Gospel doctrines, and contend for them with more vehemence than is commonly used by men who know and follow truth: for it is generally the case, that mistaken men are more† noisy, eager, and zealous to support and propagate the paradoxes of error, than right thinking and right judging men are solicitous to diffuse sound and true wisdom.

As the other vices of former generations are entailed on the present, so the intellectual pride of our forefathers has descended down to us. Like the disputers of old, we are not satisfied with what

* St. James i. 19.

† Verè quod placet, ut non.

ACRITER ELATREM, pretium ætas altera sordet.

Rom. Epist. i. xviij. 17.

* St. John iii. 19.

is written in Scripture, though that already be more than sufficient to exercise all our rational and moral powers; but we must model a Revelation in *our own* way, and set up *our own* opinion, as the standard by which the Almighty God is to direct his counsels! Impious presumption, and ridiculous self-sufficiency! Shall the creature dare dictate to the Creator the measures of his acting? Shall the sinner, who receives mercy, take upon himself to mark out the method, in which that mercy shall be shewn him, by a Judge all-powerful, who could avenge iniquity with the severest evils, if he were not more disposed to pity than to punish? Pride of no kind was made for man; and least of all, intellectual pride; for if we consider what, after all, are the faculties of man, we shall perceive that humility and diffidence are better suited to our nature.

Whatever part of the universe we may chance to contemplate, we soon find in it abundant reason to convince us, that although the extent of the human understanding be of wide comprehension, yet it is circumscribed by limits, beyond which no sagacity can penetrate, no strength of intellect can carry its researches. If we explore the deep caverns of the earth, we there discover inexhaustible beds of metals and minerals; the nature and property of these productions, by experience we can precisely ascertain; and thence convert these valuable treasures to our utmost advantage. But who, after all the most elaborate enquiries, hath been able to explain the formation of minerals? Who hath shewn any second cause adequate to the effect, that in different quarters of the earth should be deposited ores of such different qualities? Who, when he hath described the several properties of any the most common metal, can point out from any source, palpable to our senses, *why* and *whence* such particular properties are given to such particular subterraneous bodies?

If we ascend thence to the vegetable kingdom, we see the face of the earth most richly adorned and plentifully stored with herbs and plants. The class of each is distinctly known by the botanist; the medicinal virtue of each is accurately

understood by the physician. But by whom is it known, by whom is it understood *why* a peculiar soil, and a peculiar climate, are necessary for the perfect growth of many herbs and plants? By whom is it known, by whom is it understood, from any appearance or texture of a *herb*, *why* and *whence* it should be endued with certain appropriated qualities?

From herbs and plants let us proceed to animals. That the scale of existence in the animal creation should be so gradual and so extensive; that animals so various should be assigned to various regions; that the powers imparted to each class should be so exactly adapted to the exigences and nature of each; all these circumstances excite our admiration, and we know in fact that such provision is made for every animal from the lowest to the highest; but nothing in the world appears competent to produce effects so wise and beneficent.

If we look to the heavens, we are struck with the splendour of the sun, moon, and stars: we can calculate the motions of the planets, foretell many phenomena which will happen in our system, and thence establish observations highly useful to man. But *whence* the sun derives its heat and light, and *why* the planets describe their orbits in a particular line, we know not from any power in them self-originate.

To the Almighty word, which first called into being every part of creation, to the divine will, which first decreed that every particle of inanimate and animate, irrational and rational matter, should be endued with certain peculiar *

* "In causarum corporearum investigatione occupati, ineluctabiles offendimus difficultates, quia nullas regulas, aut certiora indicia huc usque habemus, ex quibus à phenomenis incipiendo, nos totam seriem causarum absque hiatu considerasse, et a primâ ad ultimam indagando et ratiocinando pervenisse verè scimus: quando ad ultimam, quæ à solâ Dei potentia pendet, pervenivimus, connexionem clarâ inter causam et divinam potentiam non intellexerimus: quia nunquam quomodo Deus, qui est spiritus infinitus, in corpora operatur, ab animo humano concipi poterit.

"Verum Deus instrumenta, quibus universum immediate regit, tam densis involvit nostri respectu ingenii tenebris, ut Philosophi ca

properties, we must ascribe the modes and essences operating around us in a manner so wonderful. "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do; deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*." It is God that ordains the laws of nature; why those laws are ordained after this or that particular manner we know not, otherwise than that they are founded in wisdom infinite. Into God's wisdom and omnipotence we must, with all humility, resolve the original principles on which every system in the universe is conducted, and forbear presumptuous and vain enquiry into the divine counsels, which from the mind of man will ever be hidden. That the world, and all things therein, are made as they are by God's appointment, *should*, and indeed *must* satisfy us in all our investigations into primary causes: *why* He so made them, and *wherefore* such an appointment, it becomes us not to ask, it concerns us not to know; it is the lot and infirmity of man to be ignorant.

From the state of ignorance, in which as men we must ever remain, with respect to the divine appointments in the natural world, we should conclude that we must be ignorant of God's counsels in the spiritual world. If the reasons, which moved the Almighty to create the works of nature in their present form, be not known to us, it were arrogance to expect that the reasons, on which the scheme of man's redemption is founded, should be fully revealed to us. It is enough, in the natural world, that God has decreed certain laws, by which all

things are directed: the remote causes, on which these laws are decreed, we enquire not: and it should be enough in the work of grace, that God has decreed a certain mode, by which man may be raised from his fallen state: the remote causes, on which this particular mode is decreed, we are neither concerned to enquire, nor competent to explain. It is the will of God, that the natural sun should give light to the eyes of men; the fact is so, and we take it as such: the will of God is also, that revelation should enlighten the minds of men; the fact is so, and as such we are bound to admit it. But in that fondness for their own conceits, which obstructs the progress of right knowledge, men have first formed to themselves an idea how *they* would disclose a revelation; and having previously settled it in their minds, that no other method can be so proper as that which their *own* fancy suggests, they are not duly influenced by the gospel-dispensation. "The Jews (says St. Paul) require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom*." Each had been prejudiced by notions preconceived; and instead of receiving the doctrines of the Apostle in the manner he preached them, they would have him substitute some other system, such as might correspond with the different opinions they had severally framed. But what is the conduct of St. Paul? He persists in delivering simple truths, without gratifying the unreasonable demand of the Jews on the one hand, and without entering into subtle and refined arguments with the Greeks on the other. He preached "Christ crucified; Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God†." "That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; then of James, then of all the Apostles, then by St. Paul himself‡." These are plain matters of fact, easy to be understood by the most igno-

arueri et extricare nequeant: ideo ubi vis extemplo limites scientiæ, invenimus: ita increta nostra veneratio in Deum, atque infinitis passionibus ab eo, qui est fons et origo omnium effectuum, causarum, et potentiarum, nos distare advertimus et confitemur: ita animum revelatio in sacra scripturâ ultro submittimus, eamque licet plurima supra hominum captum posita complectatur, devoti veneramur."

MUSECHENBROOK'S *Introductio ad Philosophiam Naturalem*, c. 1. s. 33.

* Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

* 1 Cor. i. 22.

† 1 Cor. i. 22, 24.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3, &c.

rant of his hearers; and on the indisputable certainty of these facts, the Apostles all rested the truth of their religion. Whether God, in his wisdom, could have devised other means, by which to vindicate the honour of his own moral government, to redeem man from his fallen condition, and re-instate him in immortal happiness, the Apostles were not commissioned to enquire; they were concerned to establish the certainty of the extraordinary circumstances, which proved the divine mission of Christ, and on that ground-work to inculcate the duties of faith and repentance. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Saviour being most credibly attested, and most incontrovertibly authenticated, it follows that we are to receive his doctrines as positive laws, and obey them with implicit confidence that they are founded on the unsearchable wisdom of the Almighty, in whose name and authority our Saviour came. The facts, which establish the revelation, we are bound to examine: but as the facts by which the revelation is established, are certainly more clear than the evidence of any transactions in past ages, we are not at liberty to call in question the terms of the revelation itself: and to all those, who may be prompted to explore, what must ever exceed the bounds of our finite understanding, to those whom either curiosity or self-sufficiency would incline to ask, "How can these things be?" may be applied this general answer: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong to us, and to our children for ever, that we may no the word of this law." To God only can be known the counsels, on which

the christian redemption by the sacrifice of his eternal Son, was first designed: but we know, that to "our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace *," are due, from us and from our posterity, adoration and obedience.

That is the work of obedience we may begin successfully, we are to follow the direction given by St. James, "we are to receive the Gospel, the word of Christ, with all meekness." The same humility, with which we acquiesce in the ordinary administrations of Providence, though to us incomprehensible, should be shewn in admitting the truths of revelation, though by us inexplicable: as in the one case we account for the general course of nature by ascribing all to the sole will of Him, who ordained and who cannot suspend the laws of nature; so in the other, we should rest satisfied with the doctrines of the Gospel, from conviction built on undeniable facts, that the Gospel is a dispensation coming from God, who alone has power to appoint the means, by which He will receive into favour the sinful race of men, and who can by revelation impart much more than could be discovered by reason, even as through reason is discovered much more than what is obvious to our senses. The result of long and careful enquiries into the several parts of the world's constitution should be, and usually is, a proportionable degree of veneration towards the Maker of the world, and of submission to the laws by Him established: and the effect of continued and serious examination into the grounds on which the Gospel stands, and into the important truths which it communicates to us, should be, and usually is, a diminution of our own self-sufficiency; a confession of our own inability to conceive, that any other than the Gospel-dispensation, would be equally expedient for the purposes to be accomplished; and a full assurance that the manner in which God hath spoken to us by his Son, is pre-

* St. John iii. 9.

† Deut. xxix. 29. See also Ecclesiasticus, xii. 21, 22, 23. "Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, neither search the things that are above thy strength."

"But what is commanded thee, think thereupon with reverence, for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things that are in secret."

"Be not curious in unnecessary matters: for more things are shewed unto thee than men understand."

* Eph. i. 7.

† See Red's Essays on the Active Powers of Man, Ess. IV. c. ix. p. 344. ed. 1788.

cisely that which seemed best to unerring wisdom and unbounded goodness.

In humility of this kind we are first of all to shew the meekness, with which we are to receive the word.

And when we have humbled the pride of our understanding, we may proceed to subdue the violence of our tempers; so that our meekness may be further shewn by receiving all the admonitions of the Gospel with dispassionate attention. "Let every man (says the Apostle) be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."*

The sacred writings abound with precepts of general application, with truths of universal concern: and as † every reader and every hearer of them has in his nature more or less tendency to some particular vices, it is impossible but that the consciences of some or other must be frequently stricken, when the doctrines of Holy Scripture are delivered and expounded. To reject, or even to dislike the word, because it forbids the sins to which we are inclined, because it pierces fortibly our own hearts, because it warns us of danger to which we were heretofore either ignorantly or wilfully blind, to reject or even to dislike the word of God on these accounts, were to betray ‡ impatience unreasonable, excessive, and criminal. In all other cases, where morals are not concerned, we incur expence and encounter difficulties to procure knowledge, to correct errors, to proceed in the course that may be most safe and right; and prudent it is, when we thus adopt every measure, by which our temporal affairs may be more successfully regulated. Why then are our passions and manners, why are the affections of our hearts and the propensities of our tempers to be left unimproved? On the due government of these depends our real happiness; for neither a vindictive nor impure, neither

a selfish nor an envious spirit can enjoy lasting satisfaction in this or a future life: it were wiser therefore to hear with greater frequency, rather than to mark with disapprobation, the word of God, for the very reason that it does exhibit our infirmities in their true light, rebuke our faults with the severity they deserve, and prohibit our sins with unsparing impartiality, which gives no man permission to do evil.

In receiving the word then, we may shew our meekness, by patiently attending to the doctrines of it, though to our inclinations they may be contrary, to our views adverse, to our intentions repugnant.

The Apostle calls the gospel the "engrafted word;" meaning thereby the word which had already been planted, and which must be planted still deeper in their breasts, in order to produce that temper, and those dispositions, which become the disciples of Christ. The energy with which every principle influences our conduct, is in proportion to the force with which that principle has sunk into our minds. Whatever maxims we have so thoroughly imbibed as to have them constantly recurring to our thoughts and impelling us to action, those maxims will in general so far predominate, as that the course of our lives should correspond with them. If we would conform our lives to the gospel precepts; if we would exemplify that humility, patience, gentleness, and forbearance, which are required to complete the christian character; the word, which is our law, must be grafted so inwardly and thoroughly in our souls, that our first and last thoughts, desires, and endeavours, shall be to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called;"§

When the gospel is thus received by us as the revelation of God's will, and admitted into our hearts, with a temper more inclined to obey the known doctrines than to search the hidden secrets of its dispensation, it will then be "able to save our souls;" able by its motives, able by its means, able by its helps.

* St. James i. 19.

† *Nam vitium Nemo sine nascitur!*

Hon. Sat. I. iii. 68.

‡ *Mente minus validus, quam corpore toto Nil audire velim, nil discere, quod levet ægrum, Fidis offender medicis, irascar amicis Cur me funesto properent arcere veterno.*

Hon. Epist. I. viii. 7.

§ Eph. iv. 1.

The motives by which the Gospel perpetually incites us to work out our salvation, are the fear and love which we should bear towards God. "I will forewarn you," says our Saviour, "whom you shall fear; fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."* Fear him so effectually, as that through awe of Him, no temptation should prevail on you to sin. For how hateful in the sight of an All-righteous God must our sins be, that he should send his own eternal son to condemn them; and even require the sacrifice of our Redeemer, as an atonement through which we might recover divine favour. And who, that knows the displeasure of God against iniquity, will yet presumptuously and designedly dare to offend him? See we not that God is the controuler of nature? See we not, that from the greatest mass to the smallest atom, from the height of heaven to the depth of the sea, every particle that exists is at the disposal of his will, either for continuance in being, or utter destruction? And what are we, that we should dare defy the Omnipotent? We are neither so mighty as to resist his decrees, nor so artful as to elude his search, nor so insignificant as to escape his notice. Present with all his works in power and knowledge, God, infinitely perfect, must be: if we sin, we cannot be concealed: our conscience tells us we are accountable to Him; and the Gospel assures us, that in proportion to our guilt shall be the future misery with which we shall be punished in body and soul.

To the fear of God is added the love of God, as a pressing motive to work out our salvation. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," says our Saviour;† and the reason for which we should thus devote to him all the gratitude and all the veneration our souls can conceive, is because "God hath loved us;"‡ and his divine love is not only evident by his first

creation and continual preservation of us, but it is still more abundantly and mercifully manifested in that: "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him; that he should be the propitiation for our sins."§ To those who look forward beyond the grave, for a state of immortality, and who are anxious to secure in that state the approbation and favour of their Maker; to those who know that the approbation and favour of their Maker cannot be secured without holiness of life, and that nevertheless not a soul of man is perfectly holy; to persons who thus consider the nature of the soul, the nature of sin, the imperfections of man, and the divine attributes, the sending of his Son to be a propitiation for sins which, with repentance, have been forsaken, and for transgressions which, through our frailty, we ignorantly or unwillingly commit; the sending of his Son for so merciful a purpose must appear an instance of paternal goodness to man, which should animate us to evince our deep sense of thankfulness by every act we can think acceptable from rational children to a most benevolent and gracious Father!

These motives are impressed more forcibly on our minds by the means which the Gospel ordains; such are the appointment of ministers, the reading of scripture, the offering up of private and public prayer, the observance of the sabbath, and the celebration of the sacraments; ordinances which are all sanctioned by authority of the Gospel.

Frail and sinful as ministers are, yet the appointing of men whose solemn profession and engagement it is to take the lead in prayer, to study divine truths, to instruct the ignorant, and remind the better informed, to exemplify by their practice that at least they endeavour to conform their lives to their principles; the appointing of such an order, however imperfectly their ministry may be executed, must nevertheless be of infinite utility in cherishing a general sense of religious obligation, and in pro-

* St. Luke xii. 3.

† St. Matt. xiii. 37.

‡ 1 St. John iv. 10.

§ 1 St. John iv. 9, 10.

moting the duties which are thence derived

By the reading of scripture we gain that knowledge which no other works could ever impart; knowledge of God our Almighty Father, of his Eternal Son our Merciful Redeemer, of the Holy Spirit our Directing Sanctifier; knowledge of a law so pure and holy, that, if duly obeyed, it would exalt human nature to the utmost perfection of which it is capable

By prayer we raise our souls from earth to heaven; from the grossness of a carnal, to the purity of a spiritual world, from converse with men, weak and sinful as ourselves, to intercourse with that most powerful, most righteous Being, in whom dwelleth all perfection.

The observance of the sabbath calls off our attention, at seasonable intervals, from the cares or pleasures which have diverted us from moral and religious reflection, it leads us to meditate on subjects that relate to God; it gives us leisure to examine how far our thoughts and actions correspond with his laws.

And he that on the sabbath commemorates the death of our Saviour; he that by partaking of one sacrament shews his wish to receive the benefits of the other; he that with sincerity professes sorrow and shame for sins past, exalts his Maker for the infinite mercy manifested in the work of redemption, and earnestly prays that the divine assistance may enable him for the future to amend his life; such a man cannot be conceived to return from the altar of God without at least forming resolutions to be virtuous and religious.

These are the motives, and these the means, by which the "engraved word" has a powerful tendency towards forwarding the work of our salvation; but the full efficacy of these motives and means is completed by the assistance which the Gospel promises to those that devoutly pray for it

The Gospel is not only a new promulgation of the original moral law, not only an offer of pardon to all who with unfeigned repentance shall forsake intransgressions, but it is moreover a dispensation of assistance which the Holy Spirit will impart to our souls, that

we may be enabled to purify the corruptions of our nature, and render ourselves continually better qualified for that future state to which we are advancing. Under this dispensation are given spiritual powers, which, however they may be disregarded by the thoughtless and irreligious; are sensibly felt by the serious and humble supplicants for divine grace; felt they are, not as the wild transports of fanatical enthusiasm, but as the gentle influences of sober reason and unaffected piety they suggest good actions, dissuade from evil practices, remind us that to God all our works must be known, admonish us of the consequences that must ensue from guilt, strengthen us to overcome the temptation which assails us, and excite inufferable joy in the souls of those who with patience have struggled unto victory against the insidious attacks by which their innocence has been fearfully endangered, and their peace of mind alarmingly disquieted. Such is the help, and such the comfort, which we may derive from the grace of the Holy Spirit, if we lift up our souls with a fervent desire, that we may not yield to the sin which besets us, but resist and surmount its violence.

To conclude, the end of all religion is, that we should "live soberly, righteously, and godly," that in ourselves we should be temperate and pure, to our fellow creatures, just and benevolent, to God, obedient, thankful, and devout. The reasons which would induce us to discharge these several duties punctually and conscientiously, are the confident assurance of thence deriving greater happiness in this life, and the certain hope of ensuring blessing, and escaping misery, in a future world. For the attainment of these ends there neither is, nor ever has been in this world, a system so calculated by its motives, means, and helps, as the Gospel system. If therefore we regard ourselves, if we value the satisfaction of a clear conscience, if we wish to increase the virtue and comforts of mankind, if we are concerned for our condition beyond the grave; if we are bound to obey the laws revealed to us by the Almighty,

let us receive with meekness, preserve with watchfulness, and follow with diligence, the "engendering word," which (if carefully observed) is able to save our souls.

SERMON CLV

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

On the Choice of Friends, and reading the Scriptures.

PSALM I. 1, 2.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

THOUGH every portion of Scripture in the Old Testament is highly valuable, yet the Book of Psalms in a particular manner appears to be incomparably excellent. These sacred hymns recommend themselves to our attention under several characters, and deserve our admiration on various accounts. For, whether we would be elevated by the noblest strains of the most sublime poetry; whether we would pour forth the effusions of pious gratitude to the author and giver of every blessing; whether we would find consolation to our souls in the hour of distress and anguish; or whether we would furnish our minds with precepts of virtue and maxims of religion; we need but have recourse to the several subjects of which they treat, and according to the different styles in which they are each adapted to the different arguments they illustrate. Hence, on every occasion, in every condition, and under every circumstance of life, we may find in one or other of them something applicable to ourselves, something that will speak forcibly to our own bosoms, something that will either gratify the pious affections which is predominant in our hearts, or something that will rightly in-

form the understanding in that wisdom which is good, and leadeth unto salvation. Under this last description stands the psalm immediately before us. For in it is contained an earnest exhortation to the right conduct of life, enforced, on the one hand, by considerations of that happiness which the pious and religious enjoy; on the other, by a contrast arising from that misery which the corrupt and impious experience.

A blessing is first pronounced on him who does not associate with the ungodly, with sinners, with the scornful; but who rather meditates on the important truths of religion, and endeavours to follow the duties they enjoin in all his actions.

It is to be observed, that when in the Old Testament a blessing is promised to the righteous, the law-giver, or prophet, who utters the benediction, refers in the first instance to the peculiar covenant by which the Jewish nation was directed. That government was carried on by the sanction of rewards and punishments, not spiritual and remote only, but temporal and present also, hence the effect of obedience to the divine law was to the Jews productive of immediate prosperity. With us, who live under the Gospel, the case is different. For though a due observance of virtue and piety has a natural tendency towards promoting our happiness, yet it does not uniformly and invariably terminate in worldly success. We are taught to act on higher principles than merely expectations of welfare in this state; we are animated to pursue what is just and right with the prospect of a recompense to be given hereafter, a recompense which will consist neither of wealth, nor power, nor grandeur; satisfactory reflexions on past endeavours to obey the commands of Christ; increase of knowledge in divine truths, progressive improvement in moral perfection, these will be the essential parts of that recompense, the attainment of which is reserved for a future period of our existence in the world of spirits.

It is necessary to recollect this distinction between the sanctions of the Old and New Testament, that we may not now take in a literal sense expressions which, though strictly applicable under the Jewish dispensation, are not to be used

without a considerable degree of latitude and spiritual interpretation, under the Christian covenant. With this precaution we shall not be in danger of creating to ourselves groundless anxiety, if, in the experience we have of the world, we should find that the virtuous and religious are not always rewarded with outward prosperity, though they always will be comforted with inward satisfaction, and a consciousness that God and good men approve of every action proceeding from motives of sanctity and benevolence.

In this enlarged acceptation, and with reference chiefly to spiritual happiness, though not without some view to worldly prosperity, we may proceed to examine the Psalmist's assertion, and demonstrate the truth of it.

The actions of men proceed in great measure from their principles, and their principles depend very much upon the companions with whom they contract familiar friendship. The effects which are produced through familiar friendship, arise from the natural influence of conversation and example. Conversation, carried on without restraint or reserve, by frequent repetition, imprints on the mind whatever opinions are entertained by the persons with whom we are closely connected. Hence it has happened, that in process of time a fatal change of sentiment has been made in many, who once abhorred the very thought of what was bad, and who turned away with disgust from the very conception of what was improper. A change of *sentiment* from good to bad, prepares the way for a reverse of *conduct* in the same unhappy extreme. Added to this, is the powerful impulse by which example hurries us on to imitate the actions of those whom we consider as our patterns.* Man is of all creatures the most prone to imitation; and it is almost impossible but that similarity of manners and actions must be contracted by those between whom there subsists long intimacy. Sometimes im-

perceptibly, sometimes designedly, either with a view of gratifying those with whom they associate, or from a persuasion that what their companions do, cannot be blameable in themselves; men in general conform themselves to the principles and practice of their most intimate and confidential friends.

Such then being the effects of conversation and example we may indeed pronounce that person happy who has never listened to the instigations of the corrupt, has never been the companion of the vicious, has never connected himself in close intimacy with those who in their folly "make a mock of sin,"† and treat religion with disrespect.

Of all companions, the scoffers at religion are the most dangerous and pestilential. It is their unreasonable and unnatural pleasure to sap the very foundation of all virtue; to destroy the distinction of right and wrong, to subvert the main ground on which society subsists, to disturb the peace of good minds, and to take from the world the providence, the attributes, the existence of God. Of him that is negligent in the duties of religion merely from inattention, there may be hopes that he will at length see his error, and return to a sense of piety towards his Maker and Redeemer: of him who, though he has deviated from the paths of virtue, has not yet learned to justify his vicious irregularities, there may be hopes that he will at length amend the evil of his ways: but of him who has so far perverted his judgment, so far resisted the strongest suggestions of conscience, so far opposed the clearest reasonings of the human mind, of him who has so far differed from the general consent of mankind, and is so far lost to all sense of decency, and to all love of virtue, as to decide the leading truths of religion; of such a person there can be formed no hopes that he will desist from being a monster in the rational world, and a nuisance to the society which he

* Prov. xiv. 9.

† Quicunque Deum aut numen non agnoscit, non tantum ratione caret, sed etiam sensu.

AVICENNA, quoted by Mornay de Plesses.

* Το ἡγεῖται μετὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ οὐκ ἔστι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι διακρίσει καὶ οὐκ ἔστι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος. ΑΝΤΩΝ. ΠΟΤ.

frequent. The pains which he must have taken to destroy the best instincts and most favourable prejudices in his nature, preclude all expectation that such a person can be reclaimed. Sooner shall the "Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots,"* than the empty and petulant scoffer at religion and virtue return to a just way of thinking and acting. From him, therefore, in a more particular manner should we turn away on any advances of intimacy which he may be disposed to make. Nothing that can tend to diminish our reverence of Almighty God, nothing that can tend to loosen our principles of morality in thought, word, or deed, should be so admitted into our daily habits as to become familiar; from "the counsel of the ungodly, from the way of sinners, from the seat of the scornful," we must remove ourselves in the forming of our friendships, if we value and wish to secure peace of mind and the favour of God.

Thus cautious are we to be in the forming of friendships, and in the choice of companions; and the happy consequence of our circumspection will be, the preservation of our innocence. For such a reward, it is not only our duty, but our interest also, to observe the Psalmist's admonition.

It is however to be remembered, that, although the Psalmist most powerfully dissuades us from contracting intimacies with the vicious and wicked, yet he does not fall into that rigid and supercilious austerity, which would prohibit all intercourse with men as they chance to be found in a mixed multitude. There is a wide difference between forming intimacies with particular persons, and transacting the common concerns, or following the common pursuits of life, with the public in general. In the forming of intimacies we must be scrupulous: in transacting of business with the public, and in discharging the ordinary duties of civil society, we must be content to take men as we find them. Nature and reason point out the propriety, and even

the necessity, of making this distinction in cases widely different.

Man is born for society, and feels in his mind an irresistible propensity to mingle with the company and engagements of his fellow-creatures. In the common intercourse of life, and the general business of the world, it is utterly impossible for the most prudent and cautious person to avoid all connexion with others whose character perhaps may be suspicious, or whose principles and practice may be highly censurable. Should any man be so unreasonable as to expect strict morals in every individual member of an extensive community; or should any be so morose as to withhold all converse with persons perhaps more vicious and more imprudent than himself, such a man would shew neither experience in the frailties of human nature, nor christian charity in bearing with condescension and lenity the imperfections of others. It is the duty of every individual to look well to himself, to correct what is vicious in his own conduct; to rectify what is erroneous in his own judgment; to watch over himself with unremitted vigilance; and then to keep himself not *unconnected* with the world, but *unsullied* by it. If by uniform adherence to virtue and piety he may silently admonish others through the force of example, or if in seasonable opportunities of prudent insinuation he may instruct, by gentle counsels, those who have candour enough to receive advice, such a man, by living and mixing with society, will produce in it infinitely more moral good than if he were in peevishness to desist from taking his share in the common concerns of mankind and the world.

Still however, in these commendations of the patience and forbearance with which every good man should conduct himself in carrying on the general affairs of society at large, no arguments can be found, no reasons can be implied for the defence of *particular intimacies* with the debauched and wicked. When the duties of his station are fully discharged, society has no further claim on any man; it remains with himself, in his private capacity, to select those friends whom he may most approve, and to fol-

* Jerem. xlii. 23.

low those pursuits which he may think most agreeable. To his own folly must it be imputed, if he make a wrong choice either in his friendships or his retired employments. He is warned by experience, he is warned by reason, he is warned by the word of God, to contract no intimacies with the wicked, to flee the contagion of "evil communications*," to abstain from every thing which in any degree may tend to violate innocence or corrupt the soul: and that he may be enabled the better to act with this regard to his most important concerns, he is encouraged "to delight in the law of the Lord."

"The law of the Lord," in the Psalmist's acceptation, means that part of Scripture which was written by Moses: and it is scarcely possible to meditate on it, without a gradual disapprobation of whatever is contrary to the purity and holiness which that law inculcates.

Of all the studies in which we can be engaged, those which concern man are to man most interesting. Whence came he? what his destination? what his history? whence the mixed condition of his nature? what consequences will ensue from a certain course of actions? All these are subjects of inquiry which force themselves on minds at all habituated to reflection. "In all these questions we are resolved by the writings of Moses: that man was originally created by God; that immortal happiness was designed for him; that he forfeited title to immortal happiness by disobedience to the Divine commands; that he became degraded from his primitive rank, and introduced moral evil, by the abuse of his free-will; that the connexion between moral virtue and mental happiness, between moral evil and mental misery, is ultimately, if not immediately, inseparable; these circumstances, by the fairest inference, we collect from the Mosaic history. A renewal of that moral law, which was originally stamped on the heart of man, but which through the corruption of ages was effaced and obliterated, we find to be contained in those positive precepts

which form a striking part of the Mosaic ordinances. The grateful and pious adoration of God, the discharge of all duties which man should observe towards his fellow-creatures, and the self-command with which he should govern his own appetites, are the three leading points enjoined and inculcated by the two tables: points they are so consonant with reason, and so conducive to the happiness of man, that whoever will reflect on them must be convinced of their fitness and utility; and whoever will meditate on them, must see the impropriety, the indiscretion, the folly, the wickedness of acting in defiance of principles which have God for their author, and human felicity for their object. The impression left on our minds by continually reading the same books, is in no degree less forcible than the influence arising from intimacy with the same companions. If "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise*," he that is conversant with "the law of the Lord," will feel in himself a disposition to observe that law, a disposition which will continue to grow more prevalent in proportion as its tendency is more pursued, and the good effects of rational and religious conduct are more sensibly apparent.

But if moral instruction and religious wisdom are to be derived from the study of what the Psalmist meant by "the law of the Lord," much greater advantages in the improvement of our hearts, and in the enlargement of our knowledge respecting divine truths, may we expect from meditating on what we understand by "the law of the Lord."

"The law of the Lord," to us Christians, is the whole body of Scripture. It is therein given us to see the completion of prophecies, which to the Jews were obscure; to comprehend the design of ceremonies, for which the Jews could not account; to view the important end to which the Providence of God directed for ages the concerns of Jewish and Gentile nations: it is given us to see the Saviour of mankind; to hear from his voice the spiritual doctrines which raise the

* 1 Cor. xv. 33.

* Prov. xiii. 20.

soul to aspire after the most exalted virtue; to be assured by him, that through the sacrifice of himself once offered for the sins of the world, mankind are put into a capacity of recovering their lost condition, if they will follow the precepts of his holy religion: it is given us to know beyond doubt, that there shall be a future state, in which the soul of every person shall be rewarded with spiritual happiness, in a degree suitable and proportioned to the use which, in this life, each of us has made of the powers, opportunities, and abilities to do good, imparted to us by God, according to his unerring wisdom.

As in its moral precepts the Gospel explains, by a wide and refined sense, the commandments of the law, and tends more immediately to prevent what is vicious, by restraining even the first emotions of the heart; as in its narrative of facts the Gospel most strongly points out the heinous nature of sin, by exhibiting the death of an immaculate and divine person in atonement for the transgressions of the human race; as in its assurances the Gospel is express and positive, that good deeds shall be rewarded and bad deeds punished in a future state, to which this present life is but preparatory; as the Gospel is thus essentially conducive to vital principles of real-excellence, thus instructive in teaching us the enormity of moral evil, thus persuasive in urging us to the practice of every duty intrinsically virtuous, and thus earnest in deterring us even from every thought of what is immoral, unjust, or unholy; as the Gospel, in these respects, is so superior to the Jewish law, Christians are blessed with advantages in point of knowledge, incitements, and prospects, which the Jews did not enjoy in so ample a manner; we therefore should be influenced more by the study of the whole body of Scripture, as received among us, than the Psalmist could be when he meditated on what to him had been communicated as the "law of the Lord." If contemplating the "law of the Lord" in a more limited form were to him productive of good dispositions; much more should reflection on Gospel truths create in us a love of whatever is laudable, and repel us from partaking of any measures

which stand condemned, either in the sight of God, or in the judgment of discreet men. Whoever has considered the "law of the Lord," with attention so serious, and recollection so frequent, as to have effected this great purpose of all religious exercise, may be pronounced a man happy in this world, and blessed in his prospect of that which is to come: happy is he in the only sense which deserves that name, in having a mind intent on thinking and acting as becomes a reasonable being who hopes for immortality; and blessed is he in his hopes, that he shall receive the approbation of his Creator and Redeemer, for having endeavoured to think and act conformably to that degree of knowledge and conviction of divine truth, with which he is enlightened.

What times are most seasonable for religious reflection on Gospel truths, must be left very much to the discretion and circumstances of every individual. The *Sabbath, however, is expressly pointed out as peculiarly proper for meditating on God, Christianity, and eternity; and to continue in habits of passing over the Sabbath without a thought on religion, is usually the fore-runner of dissolute principles, profligate manners, and a debauched life. Whoever begins to feel in himself a disinclination to observe the Sabbath, would do well to suspect that all is not right within his own breast, and to search out the vice that entices him from discharging the duties which he owes to his God, to his Saviour, to himself.

A less portion of time for religious meditation, and for the reading either of the Scriptures, or of books that are calculated to impart religious wisdom; a less portion of time for such useful and proper employment, than what the leisure of every sabbath affords, would be accounted sufficient by no one who thinks at all of his own imperfections and the work of salvation. How much greater portion should be allotted for sacred studies it is impossible to pre-

* See Bishop Porteus's 9th Sermon, vol. i. p. 217, 218. Ed. 1784, and Bishop's Inquiry, p. 628.

scribe, as the rule must vary, not only according to the disposition and abilities, but also according to the worldly callings of every single person. For though the Psalmist encourages us to exercise ourselves in "the law of the Lord day and night," yet reason and common sense will tell us, that this admonition is not to be taken so strictly as to preclude industry in our worldly concerns. A prayer to God at the return of every morning and evening, is indeed the reasonable and easy service, which every dependent creature is bound to pay *daily* to his Almighty Creator and most merciful Protector: and if some part of Scripture were *daily* read, it cannot be doubted that impressions of a religious nature would remain more deeply and strongly on our minds: but this *daily* reading of Scripture must not be enforced as of indispensable necessity in *all* situations; because, as the world is made for our habitation, and we are made to people and possess the world, so in general, when our first thoughts have been turned to the Author of our existence, we are obliged to resume the business belonging to that station which the providence of God has allotted us. Those who are preparing for any particular employments must be diligent in qualifying themselves for those employments by gaining previous information, and by acquiring suitable habits. Those who are actually engaged in business, are required to be industrious in their several occupations. To the greater part of mankind, their very subsistence makes bodily labour necessary: to many, a competency for themselves and families depends on mental exertion: on many is imposed a debt of gratitude, which, on every principle of honour and equity for maintenance received, should be repaid by services performed: regard to character and reputation demands the efforts of many others: and consideration of public welfare claims of every person, in every situation, that he should contribute his share towards the prosperity, the happiness, the credit of the nation in which he lives, and by which he is protected. But in executing the several offices to which we are appointed, much care, much attention, much thought is

employed; yet in all this business we are acting religiously, if we are acting faithfully and honestly. Industry in our calling is part of religion; so material a part, that he who neglects this, may be suspected of insincerity in his religious professions on other occasions; for if he will not endeavour to do good for those with whom he is connected by every tie of endearment, it is scarcely to be conceived that he should be much in earnest when he contemplates subjects relative to concerns of a nature remote and invisible. The best proof of acting conscientiously towards God, is acting strenuously for the good of man; and he that hath spent his day in useful labour for society, with approbation may reflect on his past employment, and with propriety may supplicate his Almighty Preserver to give him such rest, as may fit him for the business of the succeeding day.

The spirit of Christianity, rightly understood, has nothing in it inapplicable to general use; on the contrary, one peculiar excellence of the Christian religion is, that it enters into all the concerns of man, and is meant to pervade, direct, and influence all sorts and *conditions of human life: so that even in those hours when we are most busied in the engagements of society, we may shew by our actions how far we are improved by religion; and may judge from the rectitude, or defects in our temper and conduct, how far we need pay greater attention to the government of our souls by the restraints and precepts of the Gospel. Happy is he, who hath so long habituated himself to obey the Gospel, that he can display the Christian character, in all his behaviour: such a man will secure peace to his soul, that first and greatest of all blessings; and (though it be but a secondary consideration), yet he will be pursuing the most direct course towards ensuring prosperity in his worldly calling: "He shall be (as the Psalmist says) like a tree planted by the water-side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season; his leaf also

* See Paley's View, &c. part iii. ch. vi. vol. iii. p. 203, 204. Ed. 1.

shall not wither; and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper*." The only ground on which we may reasonably hope for success in our undertakings, is in possessing the qualities, and practising the virtues, which, from their general utility, will procure recompense, and gain esteem from the public. Skill, assiduity, sobriety, civility, justice, upon the whole cannot fail of meeting with encouragement: for as they are extremely instrumental towards the well-being and comfort of civil society, those who are known to be uniform in the application of such excellent talents, will be sought out and encouraged by their fellow-citizens. But these endowments, which greatly recommend us to the favour of others, are all pointed out as accomplishments which every Christian, who hath capacity to acquire them should labour to attain. When on one occasion St. Paul exhorts his converts to be "not slothful in business†;" on another, "to study to be quiet and to do their own business‡;" when he enforces that striking summary of perfection, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things§;" what does he less than instruct us in the means which are most effectual towards conciliating universal esteem? and what is more conducive than universal esteem towards promoting our general prosperity? The best Christian therefore has the fairest prospect of being the happiest man on all accounts. In obedience to that Gospel which he professes to observe, he will take pains to render himself useful to society, and to acquit himself with credit in the discharge of those duties which on all occasions may be required of him: hence, with reason, he may expect from others some return for the services conferred on them; at least, in justice and common right, he is warranted in such expecta-

tions; and therefore, when he hopes for prosperity, he does not hope for what he has not endeavoured to deserve. And in this persuasion, he will persevere without murmurs, be the event in this world what it may! If prosperity should attend him he will be thankful to God, who has blessed his labours; if adversity should be his lot, he will nevertheless feel an inward consolation in reflecting that he has acted his part with propriety; and still more will he be animated, when he looks forward to that future period of existence, in which every Christian expects to receive the final recompense of his upright intentions and honest actions. As "the leaf on the flourishing tree shall not wither," the good designs and virtuous deeds of the true Christian shall not perish. Disregarded or unrewarded they may be in this world; but this world is not the limit of man's continuance in being: the effects of probity, of charity, of piety, of intrinsic excellence, will follow the soul beyond the grave; and then will be the season in which we shall have "our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."*

SERMON CLVI.

BY GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

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Victory by Faith, over External Condition, Inward Temper, and Infirmities of Mortality.

I ST. JOHN, v. 4.

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

To be born of God, is to obey from the heart that influence of the divine spirit which directs and enables us to forsake the paths of wickedness, and to follow the commandments of God, made known to us by Christ. Whoever hath expe-

* Psal. i. 3, 4. † Rom. xii. 11.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 11. § Philipp. iv. 8.

* Rom. vi. 22.

rienced in his soul and manners so entire a change, as that from being regardless of religion he should become serious; from scarcely acknowledging God, he should now make it his first and chief care how to serve, honour and glorify God; from bestowing not a thought on the state of his soul, he should now be anxious to secure his salvation in a future life, by embracing the Gospel promises, and observing the Gospel precepts, by believing and acting as a Christian; such a man is styled, in the language of Scripture, a "new creature;"* new he is in his thoughts towards God; new in the feelings and reflections of his own mind; new in his actions towards his fellow-creatures. By unfeigned piety to his Creator, his Redeemer, his Sanctifier; by the reasonable practice of religious exercises; by resisting the temptations of corrupt appetite; by conscientiously avoiding every kind of sin; by a disposition to supplicate his heavenly Father in all wants and necessities either of soul or body; by reliance on his mercy and goodness for such relief as may be expedient; by a firm confidence that those who walk humbly with Christ, shall be recompensed in a future state; by strict justice in all his dealings; by sincere benevolence to all mankind; by forgiveness of injuries, and pardon even of enemies, so far as consideration of his own safety will allow; by all these tokens will the convert from sin manifest, that through God's grace he is in a manner "born again;"† and to him it will be given, by the strength of religious faith, to overcome the world. Let us examine how faith is to operate with an energy so powerful.

By the world may be understood, the various circumstances which affect the conduct and happiness of man during his continuance upon earth; and of these the chief are, external condition, inward temper, and the infirmities of mortality. In all these, religious faith will make us spiritual conquerors.

That which we all most naturally desire, is a state of prosperity: it is not

only innocent to wish for such a condition, it is even laudable to labour for it. But what are the general effects of prosperity on a man of no religion? Presumptuous security in the abundance of what he possesseth, excessive indulgence in the gratifications of appetite, total indifference to the distress of others, immoderate value of the riches which belong to him, undue attention to the second causes that have made him opulent; but not a thought of gratitude to the God by whose providence every good gift is dispensed to man; these are the evils to which prosperity inclines the person who devotes himself entirely to the world. Against these evils the religious are guarded by faith: for by faith they are constantly reminded, "not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God;"* "to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; to lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."† Faith will extend their views through all the changes which are daily and hourly happening in every walk of life; it will convince them that stability is not the law ordained for things sublunary; it will teach them that God putteth down one, and setteth up another, as seemeth best to his infinite wisdom; it will carry their souls beyond the precincts of this world, to a state more perfect and altogether spiritual, where, with God, there can be no other respect of persons, than as in their trial they have done righteously.

As faith, by some motives, discourages the insolence of prosperity; so, by others, it alleviates the afflictions of adversity. The language of faith is, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."‡ And why? because God is wise, because he is good; because he is powerful.

The wisdom of God at once comprehends the whole arrangement of man's life. Human prudence can at best but conjecture the result of any action immediately to be performed; through a

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † St. John, iii. 7.

* 1 Tim. vi. 17. † 1 Tim. vi. 18.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 6.

ong series of causes and effects our bounded view is not able to reach. From the contracted limits of our foresight must naturally arise extreme ignorance of our future destiny: the very measures we adopt for the attainment of some worldly advantage, may terminate in consequences directly contrary to our expectations; and the acquisition of an object which we think most desirable, may be the occasion of some circumstances that may imbitter our days. Observation of occurrences that happen constantly, should teach us to know our own blindness; should convince us, that all we can do towards the forwarding of our prospects, is to act circumspectly, diligently, and uprightly, in our peculiar station; which duty, when we have carefully performed, then, as "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;*" as the tendencies of the second causes are not uniformly in the same direction, but are made subservient to the Divine will in the government of the universe; and as God in his wisdom must know better than ourselves the condition best suited to us as beings in a state of probation; faith bids us "commit all our works unto the Lord,"† and bear the event with becoming patience.

This submission of our will to the Divine administration, is recommended to us by consideration not only of the wisdom, but also of the goodness of God.

God, who is infinite in all perfection, can will nothing but the happiness of his creatures. If in the course of our lives we encounter so many difficulties, which, at the time of suffering, diminish our happiness, still the goodness of God is thus to be justified. God hath called us into existence, not as creatures of some few days, but as beings designed perhaps to continue for some years in this world, and certainly to live through eternity in a future state. The Providence of God hath respect unto both these conditions; and therefore, in its dispensations it considers not merely the present moment, but so ordains all events as that the present should be preparatory to a

more distant period in this life, and the whole of this life be a course of moral discipline for* another which is to follow. The goodness of a parent is manifested, not by momentary indulgence of perverse humour, not by permitting a child to abandon himself to pleasure, not by consulting only how to make provision for the morrow: the good parent corrects whatever is vicious, trains up his child in temperate regularity, lays the foundation of his future character by a suitable system of learning, and in prudence considers how to furnish him with some means of support, when he shall have arrived at years which remove him from parental direction. In some such view we should consider the dispensations of God. We are born for† higher and nobler purposes than merely to eat, drink, and perish like brute animals. We have duties to discharge towards ourselves, towards our fellow-creatures, towards our Maker: we have bodies to be preserved for a mature season by temperance; we have souls to be prepared for spiritual improvement, by various methods suited to our various dispositions and various exigencies. God, in his goodness, appoints for us that succession of prosperous or adverse circumstances, which may best fit us to act as becomes men endued with reason, intended for society, and destined for immortality; and if in this appointment the portion of adversity should be the greater, yet faith in God's goodness will bid us conclude, that however unsearchable may be the ways of his providence, yet they must necessarily be conducted with mercy and benevolence. Perhaps we have need of apparent severity to teach us humility: perhaps we are of tempers that can be kept under restraint only by distresses: perhaps we have been imprudent, perhaps we have been indolent, perhaps we have been debauched and prodigal, and are now only reaping the natural fruits of folly and negligence, of

* See "Divine Benevolence Asserted;" by Dr. Balguy, p. 70. 101.; and Hutcheson on the Passions, §. vi. p. 168, 169. Glasg. Ed. 1769.

† Ad altiora quædam et magnificentiora, crede mihi, natū sumus. Cic. de Fin. l. 2.

* Eccles. ix. 11. † Prov. xvi. 3.

corruption and profligacy: perhaps we may have been attached to the things of this world more than we ought, and are now admonished to recollect that God and virtue should be the first objects of our heart. Or put the case another way: Conceive a man excellent in principles and manners as the frailty of human nature will admit, and yet struggling with adversity. Think ye that God's goodness doth herein fail? Assuredly not. The misery of every man is just so much as he feels it to be: but whoever hath devoted his soul to God, and directed his actions by the commands of religion, experiences not from adversity a degree of sorrow in any proportion adequate to the consolations of piety and right conduct. Nor to such a man will adversity appear under the same view in which it is seen by persons indifferent to religion. In the opinion of him that believes and trusts in God, prosperity and adversity are no marks either of God's favour on the one hand, or of his displeasure on the other. The distribution, of temporal gifts to individuals is indiscriminate; wealth and power imply not merit;* poverty and low condition bespeak not demerit; in these allotments the best and the worst of men meet together. But faith looks beyond these transient circumstances: to the peace of the soul arising from a conscience void of offence towards God and man, it turns for its most pure, lasting, and independent happiness; and in finding that, it says, in the midst of adversity. "O heavenly Father, not my will, but thine be done;"† for that will which created, which preserves, which enlightens, which redeems man, cannot be otherwise than benevolent and good in all its appointments.

By suggesting God's power, faith also gives comfort in adversity. It ascribes to God an absolute control over all creatures in the universe; a control

which, to dispute were folly, to resist were madness. In this acknowledgment of God's irresistible power, it is not to be implied, that man should not exert, to the utmost of his abilities, all his active and reasoning faculties, both in temporal and spiritual concerns: the calls of nature, the voice of reason, the commands of God, urge him to unwearied diligence in honest and religious pursuits; and a woe is denounced on that unprofitable servant, who neglects to improve his talent. But by faith we are taught, that though "there are many devices in man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;"‡ and the conviction of this truth which leads to resignation, prevents unreasonable murmurs and unavailing fretfulness. A full persuasion of God's omnipotence affords consolation in another view. However distressing may be our adversity, yet he hath power to relieve and reverse it. The proud may treat us with contempt, the wealthy with insolence; companions of our better days may be faithless; friends may want ability to help us: but as in God there is nothing of human weakness, so on him alone can we place our reliance, confident that he is able to remove the evils which oppress us, and that he will remove them so far as in his wisdom and goodness he may judge expedient for us.

Such then is the influence of religious faith on the two leading distinctions of man's condition, prosperity and adversity. Let us now see its efficacy on some of our passions and dispositions.

Through faith our chief joy is founded, not on temporal possessions, not on sensual gratifications, not on fanciful amusements, not on pleasures that are fleeting; a sound mind, an enlightened understanding, a pure heart, a quiet conscience, domestic harmony, intercourse of friendship, works of benevolence, the exercises of devotion, a love of God and virtue, and a hope of salvation through his blessed Redeemer; these are the substantial and permanent grounds on which the Christian builds his joy,

* Θανατος δι γινε και ζωη, δοξα και αδοξια, πονος και ηδونه, πλωτος και πινος, παντα ταυτα επιστης συμβαλουν επιδωσινους τους τι αγαθους και κας καποις, οφει καλα οντα, οτι αισχυου. οτ αρ αγαθα, οτι κακα εστι. M. ANTONIN, L. ii. 11.

† St. Luke, xlii. 42.

* Prov. xix. 21.

a joy "which no man taketh from him."*

Occasions of sorrow are to all of us manifold, and to most of us bitter. The imprudence of some friends, the distress of others; the sickness of some whom we dearly love, and the loss of others who were to us as our own souls; these are causes of grief, which, as we can neither prevent, so neither can we experience with cold unconcern. Faith does not condemn, it only regulates grief: our feelings of humanity are not to be suppressed, but they should be moderated: reasonable indulgence of them is craved by our nature; excess is forbidden both by nature and grace. That we "sorrow not as men without hope,"† is the precept of faith, applicable to all circumstances of worldly concern.

* That which creates the most piercing sorrow, is the recollection of sin. On this, as we make farther advances in goodness, we look back with increasing abhorrence. We stand, in our own judgment, self-condemned; we lament our folly, our weakness, our wickedness, in the committing of offences against our conscience, and against the known commands of a righteous and good God. In such sorrow there can scarcely be excess; yet faith bids the truly penitent be comforted; bids them come unto Christ for rest in their souls; bids them "return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy on them; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon them."‡

Are we by nature disposed to *hastiness of temper*, which, in moments unguarded, betrays us either into improper language or violent behaviour, impelling us to offend against established manners, and to disregard humane forbearance, in some such way as will afterwards occasion to us remorse and shame?

Are we by nature disposed to such *hastiness of temper*? By faith we are led to overcome this enemy, to the repose of ourselves and of all around us. The Word of God pronounces thus: "He that is soon angry, dealeth fool-

ishly."* "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."† "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry."‡ "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."§ By faith in God we shall believe, that what he condemns must be sinful, what he forbids must be avoided, what he counsels must be wise, what he commands must be indispensable: and by continual recollection of his declarations against violent passions, we shall gradually form those habits of gentleness, which sweeten the whole intercourse of life, and which peculiarly adorn the Christian profession.

Is there in our natural disposition a tendency to *envy*? A more tormenting passion can scarcely be harboured in the breast of man. On every side perpetually arise occasions which excite uneasiness to the envious person: the flourishing condition of one, the reputation of another; the success of this, the general esteem of that man, are never-failing sources of vexatious and corroding anxiety. His own circumstances, however in themselves desirable, are overlooked: his own attainments, of whatsoever kind they may be, give him no satisfaction; there are those whom he fancies to be in a better situation, though of less desert, than himself; and on them he fixes a jealous and malignant eye. Not so the man who is "transformed in the renewing of his mind;"¶ the spirit that is in him hath overcome an affection so vile and so uncharitable. He does not pretend to despise the gifts of Providence; he knows their value, and is thankful for that portion of them which is conferred upon him: but then he has learnt to check every wish that the liberal bounty of God should be

* Prov. xiv. 17.

† Prov. xix. 22.

‡ Eccl. vii. 9.

§ Eph. iv. 31.

¶ Όσα ευτυχηματα εις, ορχιδον περι παντα φθονος εις, και μισηση εν αυτοις, η-οιονται διου αυτης ηχ.ιι.

ARISTOT. Rhet. L. ii. c. 10. §. 2.

¶ Rom. xii. 2.

* St. John, xvi. 22.

† 1 Thess. iv. 13.

‡ Isaiah, lv. 7.

limited towards others; he has learnt to prefer the satisfactions of equanimity to the restless agitations of discontent; he has learnt to consider worldly possessions, which are fleeting, as infinitely less worthy his attention than spiritual blessings. That charity "which suffereth long, and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up; which becometh not itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil; which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;"* if thereby the advantage of a fellow-creature may reasonably be promoted; that most excellent endowment, the fruit of God's spirit, it will be the object of faith to obtain and manifest.

Faith in God through Christ directs us to overcome the temptations which may arise, either from our own appetites, or from the corruptions of the world.

He that believeth on the Son of God, hath every inducement, every motive, every help towards the resisting of temptations.

He hath an example of perfect virtue set forth for imitation in the life of Christ. "Holy, harmless, undefiled;"† intent on the great purposes which he came on earth to accomplish, by no allurements of worldly pleasure could our Lord be seduced, by no proffers of power could he be diverted, by no sufferings of torment could he be deterred from fulfilling all righteousness. It is an advantage peculiar to Christianity,‡ that we have a pattern of consummate excellence, after which we should be careful to direct our conduct. "Tempted like as we are, yet without sin;"‡ our Lord hath shewn us, that man, with all his infirmities, if he will strive to regulate his passions, and pray fervently to God for divine assistance, may make considerable progress in spiritual perfection, though he cannot resemble Christ in unblemished innocence.

He that believeth on the Son of

God, knoweth the recompense that is promised to well-doing, and the vengeance which shall overtake sinners; he considers that a glorious immortality awaiteth him who overcometh in the contest with sin and Satan; but that tribulation and anguish must be the doom of him who has yielded his body and soul to the dominion of corrupt appetites; and in defiance of every warning which nature or grace could give, hath persisted wilfully and knowingly in trespasses. As "by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, chusing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward: as by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible;"* so by faith will he that is born of God relinquish the indulgence of vicious gratifications, for the more pure joy of a soul undefiled, and the approbation of God.

That promise of divine assistance which is given "to us, to our children, to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call;"† that promise will be received with full assurance by faith, and will encourage us, in the hour of trying temptation, to supplicate our compassionate intercessor, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in the time of need."‡ In our petitions for § worldly things, we know not whether the object of our prayer may eventually produce the greater degree of happiness, or the larger portion of misery; requests therefore of this kind, we must beg to be granted so far only, as God may foresee them conducive to our welfare: but when we pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen us against the force of any temptation, we

* Heb. xi. 24. † Acts, ii. 39.

‡ Heb. iv. 16.

§ Οὐκ ἔστιν μέμνησαι ἐν πολλῇ ἀπορίᾳ φασκεῖν εἶναι, ὅπως μὴ λαβὼν σπουδὴν εὐχομένους κακὰ, δοκῶν δὲ ἀγαθὰ; See Plato's Second Alcibiades, p. 135. in ETWALL'S Edition; and that Editor's Notes on p. 135, 136.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. † Heb. vii. 26.

‡ Heb. iv. 15.

are confident that the result of our petition can lead only to good. The reformation of our lives, and the purifying of our hearts are the chief works we have to perform as preparatory towards the attainment of salvation: when to the accomplishment of these ends we ask for that ability, which by nature we have not, we ask for what must prove a spiritual blessing, and as such, what God will certainly grant to our earnest prayers. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* If men, with all their infirmities, are nevertheless inclined to make their children happy, by conferring on them favours which may innocently gratify them, much more will God, whose most adorable attribute is love, impart to us that portion of divine assistance, which may be needful to secure us, from the most formidable of all dangers, the dangers of sin. For this assistance, faith will impel us to pray; and the effect of our prayer will be spiritual victory.

As the prevalence of faith corrects our inward dispositions, so its strength sustains our infirmities of mortality. Look to the bed of sickness, and see the patient resignation and lively hope of a Christian animated by faith in God! The pains of disease, however they may torture him, and force from his body deep groans of agony, yet they excite not in his soul any thoughts of complaint, as though God were not gracious in all his dispensations. That in the midst of life we are in death; that in Adam all die; that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;"† on these truths he has frequently meditated, and has thus prepared himself for an approaching dissolution of his mortal body. But faith looks beyond the present scene: it says to the soul, "though in Adam all die, yet in Christ shall all be made alive‡;" "though through the offence of

one, many be dead," yet "by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous;" "and as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."* This is the encouragement, the comfort, the assurance which faith imparts to the dying Christian, in confidence of which he exclaims triumphantly, "O death, where is now thy sting! O grave, where is now thy victory!"† To him that hath believed and sincerely endeavoured to obey the Gospel, the terrors of death and the grave cannot be formidable. For however, upon a review of his past life, he must feel himself humbled and contrite for many actions which he now condemns, yet he trusts that God, for Christ's sake, will consider repentance as a recommendation to his favour; that he will regard sincere and earnest efforts of amendment as grounds for his mercy, his approbation, his blessing‡.

Thus powerful as faith is in its influence on the various conditions, affections, and prospects of man; it well deserves the high appellations with which it is extolled in Scripture. It is the principle which first turns us to God; it is the inducement which prompts us to conform our wills and actions to his Gospel; it is the spring whence flow our most admirable virtues; it is the grace which adorns those virtues in the sight of God; it is the source whence we derive the most substantial comforts; it is the only solid foundation of religion in this world; it is the only firm rock on which we can securely rest our expectation of spiritual happiness in a life immortal! In faith therefore towards God, through Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier, may we "be steadfast and unmoveable; always abounding in holiness, that work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."‡

* Rom. v. 15. 19. 21. † 1 Cor. xv. 55.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

* St. Luke, xi. 13. † Rom. v. 12.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

SERMON CLVII.

BY GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

On Thanksgiving for the Fruits of the Earth.

PSALM lxxv. 12.

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.

THERE was a law among the Jews, which ordained that they should annually observe "the feast of harvest;" and in the celebration of this feast, they were to offer unto the Lord "the first fruits of the principal grain, which they had sown in their fields."* The design of this ordinance was to impress their minds with a due sense of gratitude for that goodness of Providence, which, with every returning year, gave them "fruitful seasons," and thus "filled their hearts with food and gladness."†

The ritual part of this ordinance, the waving of a sheaf before the altar, the simplicity of Christian worship cannot adopt; but it should adopt that part which is spiritual; it should embrace thanksgiving to Almighty God for his unbounded beneficence in supplying our wants with a rich abundance of herbs, fruits, and corn. At this‡ season of the year then, let us meditate on the divine goodness, as it is exhibited in the sustenance of man!

The regions of the earth are immeasurably extended, and from the diversity of their situations, are exposed to different degrees of heat and cold; yet notwithstanding the world is so wide, and its climates are so various, there is scarcely a spot inhabited by the human race; which does not produce some sort of vegetables, peculiarly accommodated to the support of those who are placed in any particular quarter. The Almighty word, which first said, "Let the earth

bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind,"* still continues to make the earth productive, either by the force of natural growth, or by means of human industry. Whether it be from spontaneous fertility, or from the labours of man, that the earth gives provision, still the praise belongs ultimately to God, since the innumerable kinds of plants which contribute to our support, were first furnished with seeds, and are propagated to us with increase, by the wisdom and Providence of God. It was in wisdom that he first formed them; it is by providence perpetually exerted, that he continues to multiply, and make them yield fruit in due season.

We who inhabit this quarter of the globe, experience the effects which arise from vicissitude of atmosphere, and sensibly feel the influence of climate. Thankful should we be to God, that notwithstanding this perpetual change in the air which surrounds us, we yet see "our barns filled with plenty."† Hath it pleased God at one season to "give snow like wool? hath he scattered the hoar frost like ashes? hath he cast out his ice like morsels?"‡ Yet, in all this severity of winter, the fruits of the earth have been but retarded in vegetation, they have not for ever lost their vital qualities; their native properties have been only hidden, but not destroyed. Hath God at another season caused "the spreadings of the clouds?"§ hath he made darkness his secret place, hath he made dark waters and clouds of the sky a pavillion round about him?|| Yet in his hand were the balancings of the clouds;"¶ yet by his decree was there "a course for the overflowing of waters,"** "so that rain descended in mercy on our land;"†† not to the corruption, but the growth and refreshment of our fruits. The effects of blasting, of mildew, of drought, hath been graciously averted from us; the locust, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, those avengers of heaven,

* Gen. i. 11.

† Prov. iii. 10.

‡ Psal. cxlvii. 16.

§ Job, xxxvi. 29.

¶ Psal. xviii. 11.

|| Job, xxxvii. 16.

** Job, xxxviii. 25.

†† Job, xxxvii. 13.

* Ex. xxiii. 16. † Acts, xiv. 17.

‡ Autumn.

have been mercifully kept from doing us injury!

The value of these blessings escapes our notice, from the frequency with which they recur. Objects, which are repeatedly familiar to our view, excite less admiration: gratifications, which are continually offered to our senses, by degrees lose their pleasure: and even the favours of heaven, which are enjoyed without interruption, are in general received with a hand not uplifted, with a heart not attentive in gratitude to the all-bounteous donor. But let us reverse the scene of a land blessed by God's Providence! let us conceive a country, where inclement seasons, where intemperate elements, where the displeasure of God have sorely vexed the inhabitants! Instead of fertility, there will be found barrenness; instead of plenty will appear dearth; instead of the joys which proceed from sufficiency, there will prevail the anxious suspense which scarcity creates. Call to your remembrance that part of Holy Scripture which sets forth the history of Joseph. What, think ye, must have been the condition of Jacob's family when the land of Canaan was afflicted with dearth? The sons of Israel assembled in the habitation of their father, to devise measures for the supply of provisions: but stricken as they were with consternation, and oppressed with sadness at their deplorable situation, they viewed each other in silence with reciprocal compassion, till at length their aged father exclaimed, "Why do ye look one upon another?"* In which short address the Patriarch seems to say, "I read in your countenances the distress of your minds; I see you are oppressed with apprehensions lest your families should perish with want; the powers of your understanding are weakened, the faculties of your speech are disabled by the horror which hath seized you; I therefore must dispel this consternation, and suggest to you the only expedient that can preserve us." The same family meet again a second time; but with this aggravation of sorrow to

the aged Patriarch; his son Simeon was detained as a prisoner and bondman in Egypt. The famine was still sore in the land; and the quantity of corn, which had been heretofore purchased by the sons of Jacob, was now almost exhausted. "Go again (says the father) and buy us a little food;" buy us not, that measure which in times of plenty we might consume without stint, but that little supply which necessity requires for the bare preservation of our existence. A second purchase of corn could not be made, but at a price which Jacob valued almost dearly as his own life: Benjamin, his youngest and darling son, was to be sent to a country, whence the father apprehended he never would return. But even this price the patriarch was compelled to pay, so earnest were the solicitations of his other sons in their anxiety lest themselves and their households should die with hunger.

Pitiable is the sight of a family, which conceives even fears of extreme want; but infinitely more pitiable is the lot of those, by whom all the miseries of actual famine are really felt. There is not a calamity incident to man more terrible in its consequences than famine, and therefore is it frequently denounced in Scripture as a most severe threat of punishment for the wickedness of a people. We need but recollect the dreadful accomplishment of our Saviour's predictions against Jerusalem, to be convinced of the dire evils produced by famine. The Jewish historian tells us, the famine was so great, that it destroyed all respect to decency, and dissolved all the ties of natural affection. Wives snatched the meat out of the mouths of their husbands; children, from their parents; and mothers, from their infants. The aged who defended their bread, were beaten; the women, who had concealed it, were torn with violence: neither infancy nor age was treated with pity; but some were put to the rack, and others suffered exquisite torments, that discovery of their food might be forced from them. The dearth of all wholesome provisions was at length such, that the famished Jews were driven to eat what even the vilest beasts would have re-

* Gen. xlii. 1.

fused: and to complete the scene of woeful desperation, a mother fed upon the flesh of her own child!

A view of the miseries sustained by others, sets our own happiness in a more striking light. When we hear that such are the evils occasioned by *famine, and then reflect on the competency of food with which we are supplied, our hearts are lifted up with fervent gratitude to the Almighty, and with the Psalmist we say, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men! for he satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."†

The royal psalmist, in another passage, has thought it neither unworthy of particular notice, nor degrading the dignity of his subject, to mention in express terms the grain of wheat as a most valuable gift of Providence.‡ And in imitation of Ps. lxxxvi. the devout author of Ps. cxlvii. [whether Nehemiah or Haggai] has praised God for "filling the land of Judea, with the finest of wheat."§

The people of Judea, like the inhabitants of this our country, were much given to agriculture; with singular propriety therefore were they reminded of that, which above all things best repays the labour of the husbandman.

There is moreover an especial mark of Providence, which we of this land should observe, in the nature and fruitfulness of the grain, that contributes chiefly to our support. "It is worthy the noting, (says an ingenious || naturalist,) that wheat, which is the best sort of grain, of which the purest, most savory and wholesome bread is made, is patient of both extremes, heat and cold; growing and bringing its seed to maturity, not only in temperate countries, but also, on the one hand, in the cold and northern; on the other, in the hottest and most southerly." "Nor is it less observable, and not to be commemorated without

acknowledgment of the divine benignity to us, that (as *Pliny rightly notes) nothing is more fruitful than wheat. If Pliny, a heathen, could make this fertility of wheat argumentative of the bounty of God to man, making such plentiful provision for him of that which is of most pleasant taste and wholesome nourishment, surely it ought not to be passed over by us Christians without notice-taking and thanksgiving."

Nor should this gift of Providence be received with less gratitude, because it is to be sought with much labour, and to be acquired with unwearied industry: on the contrary, we should be the more thankful for every blessing, in proportion to the pains which were necessary towards the attainment of it: for every object becomes more valuable to the possessor, when labour has been the price of acquisition; and it gratifies the mind with the most satisfactory pleasure, to reflect that the blessing of God has prospered our labour. Indeed, the goodness of God is manifested in this very appointment, that industry should be a law of our nature, should be a condition indispensable for the supply of our necessities; for, in consequence of this dispensation, the health of the body is invigorated, the powers of the mind are called forth into action,† various arts are cultivated, and social happiness exceedingly improved.

Wherever the human species is found to subsist entirely by any other means, and in no degree by the fruits of the earth, there the state of mankind is comparatively wretched; ‡ for their manners are savage, their minds indolent, their inventions few, their intercourse with each other limited; but no sooner is the art of raising a proportion of sustenance from the fruits of the earth introduced

* *Triticum nihil est fertilius; hoc ei natura tribuit, quoniam eo maxime alit hominem.*

Pl. Nat. Hist. L. xviii. c. 10.

† *Ut varias usus meditando extunderet artes Paulatim, et sulcis frumenti quæreretur herbarum, Et silicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.*

Virc. G. i. 133.

‡ See Forster's Observations, made during a Voyage round the World, p. 373. Ed. 1778.

* "ΓΑΓΓΗΣ ΚΑΚΟΕΠΤΟΣ," is Homer's expression; *Od. xviii. 54.* "MALESUADA FAMES," Virgil's; *Æn. vi. 276.*

† *Psal. cxvii. 8.* ‡ *Psal. lxxxvi. 16.*

§ *Psal. cxlvii. 14.*

|| Ray, p. 114; and Derham, B. iv. ch. xi.

and established among a people, than their condition becomes more happy, because more productive of those enjoyments which are * suited to the nature of man. The chief spring of those enjoyments is the exercise of industry: God hath appointed *that* to be the source, whence a considerable share of our happiness should be derived. And thus it is, that every man may be very instrumental to his own comfort: for though God alone is the author and giver of all good things, yet he dispenses not his favours without some condition to be performed on our part: he requires the concurrence of man's industry as a recommendation to his divine benignity; but when man hath performed all, that his powers will enable him to execute, then heaven will be gracious, and by infinite means of Providence will so direct the course of affairs, that success shall be the reward of our painful endeavours. It is God, "that visiteth the earth and blesseth it;"† "that prepareth their corn,"—"that crowneth the year with his goodness;" yet he does this not for the indolent, but for the industrious: for "He that tilleth his land, shall be satisfied with bread;"‡ and "the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness;"§ but "the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, shall beg in harvest, and have nothing;"|| "an idle soul shall suffer hunger;"¶ "he that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man."**

That man is endowed with discernment capable of distinguishing the different seasons; that he can ascertain when it is proper to begin the different works necessary towards preparing for his sustenance; that he hath ingenuity to discover arts by which to make ready his food, and to render it more salubrious than it would be if taken without prepara-

tion, should also excite our gratitude; for in the language of Isaiah, "His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him."* Had man been only led like other living creatures to the food best suited to his nature, even *that* had been a proof of divine Providence; but when to this instinct are added faculties, which no brute creature possesses, and knowledge of arts, which by no brute creatures are attainable, the paternal goodness of God towards his creature man is abundantly heightened, and signally displayed. It is therefore man's duty to testify his sense of gratitude to his gracious Creator, by every possible act of thanksgiving, piety, and virtue, which can become a servant of God most truly sensible of the manifold blessings conferred upon him.

We, who live in the glorious light of revelation, can never be at a loss to know what acts God, for Christ's sake, will deem acceptable in his sight.

By Christ, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks in his name."† Not to praise God, and not to give him thanks, is in effect either to deny or to dissemble that God is our preserver.

By Christ, let us present our bodies, a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."‡ The thoughts of our souls, the strength of our bodies, the desires of our hearts, must be all consecrated to him, and directed in obedience to his supreme will: it is our spiritual and rational service thus to devote to Almighty God those powers which from him we have received; received for nobler purposes than merely to indulge in sensual pleasures, and to live unmindful of the God that made us.

"To do good and to communicate, forget not;" for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.§ Charity and beneficence to all persons in distress, are duties particularly inculcated by the Gospel; and a reward is promised to acts of kind-

* "If there be any one state, better than all others, for supplying these wants, this state of all others, must needs be most natural."

See Harris's *Dialogus concerning Happiness*, Part 1. p. 149. 1765.

† Psal. lxxv. 9, 10. 12. ‡ Prov. xii. 11.

§ Prov. xxi. 5. || Prov. xx. 4.

¶ Prov. xix. 15. ** Prov. xxi. 17.

* Isaiah, xxviii. 26.

† Heb. xiii. 15.

‡ Rom. xii. 1.

§ Heb. xiii. 16.

ness, which, in obedience to God's commands, are done to the indigent and unfortunate. Those, who in a more especial manner have cause to thank God that "he crowneth the year with his goodness," those to whom their fruits have yielded abundant increase, should remember the charge given by St. Paul, "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life."* Thus should the wealthy shew their gratitude, and not adopt that thoughtless security of the worldly-minded person, whom our Saviour represents as saying within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."† This is the language of presumptuous self-sufficiency, the conduct of inconsiderate folly; for should the voice of God say unto the rich man, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided?"‡ should death snatch him suddenly from the world, then will his impiety towards God, and his inhumanity towards his fellow-creatures, be among the sins which will merit the divine displeasure. §

The necessity of observing these and all other Christian precepts, arises not only from their own real intrinsic excellence and reasonableness, but also from the prospect of a future state, which our Saviour has described in a parable allusive to our present subject, and which he thus explains: "He that soweth the good seed is the son of man: the field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world: and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father."* That "with honest and good hearts, when we have heard the word of God, we may keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience;"† that with a love of integrity, a reverence for Christ's religion, a resolution to follow it amidst all the difficulties and all the trials which must attend a state of probation; that our spiritual harvest of faith and good works may render us the objects of God's favour, should be our first and most earnest prayer: but when we have sought "the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"‡ when we have supplicated the Almighty for divine grace to assist our spiritual wants, we may then innocently and properly offer our petitions to the author and giver of all good things, "That our sons may grow up as the young plants, and that our daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple; that our gainers may be full and plentiful with all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: that our oxen may be strong to labour: that there be no decay; no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."§

* St. Matth. xiii. 37. † St. Luke; viii. 15.
‡ St. Matth. vi. 33. § Psal. cxliv. 12.

* 1 Tim. vi. 18. † St. Luke, xii. 19.
‡ St. Luke, xii. 20.
§ Aut qui divitiis solj incubuere reptis
Nec partem posuere suis.

VIRG. Æn, vi, 610.

SERMON CLVIII.

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

God the original Author of all Blessings enjoyed by Man.

2 Cor. x. 17.

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!

By continual intercourse with objects of sense, and familiar habit of receiving the manifold blessings of life through the intervention of second causes, we frequently neglect to carry back our thoughts to that original Author of all existence, by whose law the works of creation were ordained and constituted; and we ascribe to powers, which are but God's instruments, that tribute of praise which in greater part should be assigned to God himself! The economy of Divine Providence, by the agency of second causes, is indeed wonderful, and abundantly displays the wisdom and goodness of that Almighty Being, by whose appointment it was established: it is however requisite, that we should not acquiesce in barely extolling the *means* by which blessings are imparted to mankind; it is the part of humility, and the business of piety, to look with gratitude towards the Author of those means, and to refer all bodily, local, temporal, mental, and spiritual advantages ultimately to God, as the primary and principal source from whence they all flow.

In contemplating man, we are naturally led to consider him in the first place as a creature endowed with singular properties in the constitution of his frame. In every part* of him appears visibly the hand of a Creator, who, with exquisite arrangement, has admirably disposed the several members of the body in a manner best calculated to serve each its respective ends. By due exertion, every organ and every limb of the body acquires insensibly additional per-

fection; insomuch that in men habituated, either through necessity or choice, rather to active than sedentary employments, are seen instances of agility and strength, which are almost incredible. Yet in the possession of these properties what has man to boast? Only that in this, as in other circumstances, he is† gifted by God with powers designed first for self-preservation, and then for the benefit of his species. Commend him over so much for the laborious practice by which he has attained uncommon use of his bodily faculties; admire him, as you please, for the firmness of his texture, or the proportions of his stature; yet, after all, whence does he receive it, that he is made capable of extraordinary efforts, and that he appears superior in external form? The cheek of the languid, the couch of the infirm, the bed of the sick, will often remind us of a duty, which in the vigour of health we are apt to forget: if reason and religion are not heard, the harbingers of death at least will admonish us that, as first of all from God we derived ability to attain any corporeal advantages, so consequently on God we must depend for the longer or shorter continuance of them. Without his will, we could not have begun; without his will, we cannot preserve our existence; where then is there room for boasting in outward excellencies? That they are ornamental, that they are beneficial to the possessor of them, is unquestionable; but equally unquestionable it is, that the possessor of them is indebted for them originally to his Maker: if therefore in health and strength he be disposed to glory, let him glory also in the Lord as in the Giver of them.

The regions of the world are widely extended and infinitely diversified. In different climates are found varieties, not only in productions of inanimate nature, but in the human species. Countries‡ there are, where men appear in a condition worse than that of brute beasts. Without garments to cover, or huts to shelter them, they endure the severities

† Εἰ μὴ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμεῖς τοῦ σώματος.
Rom. II. i. 13.

‡ The inhabitants of New South Wales.

* See Xenophon's Memorabilia, lib. i. c. 4.

of inclement seasons; and totally ignorant of all arts, they subsist on food precarious and scanty.

Removed but a small distance from the barbarism of these, are others who are clad in the skins* of sea-monsters, who support life by the most nauseous aliment, who shiver under hovels rudely constructed, and who themselves seem so conscious of their own misery, that they occupy their thoughts with little else than reflexion on their want and wretchedness.

Rising above them, in other parts of the globe, are men, who do indeed exhibit proofs of ingenuity in the cultivation of useful arts, and who enjoy many comforts of social intercourse; yet still retaining the savage ferocity of unsubdued passion, they satiate their revenge by exercising the most horrid cruelties on the victims of their fury, and complete the scene of inhuman triumph by feasts of the foulest and most abominable nature.

But leaving regions still barbarous, let us come to nations that profess themselves civilized. Of them, are many within our knowledge that experience not the inestimable blessings we enjoy; they have neither the same freedom, nor the same security, nor the same reciprocal helps, nor the same general sense of rectitude, nor the same lights of reason, nor the same truths of religion, imparted to them, which are diffused universally through the land we inhabit. In the comparison of our own with innumerable other nations, we surely have inducements irresistibly strong for loving with deep attachment, and for extolling with honest pride, the country in which we are born, protected, and cherished.

But let us ask, by whose appointment has it so befallen us, that this should be the place of our nativity? The choice of situation, in which we would act our part on the globe, was clearly not given to us, nor were the fathers that begat us enabled to fix on the spot where they would be born. God alone could ordain for our ancestors, could ordain for us,

that in this particular quarter of the world we should appear to fulfil the several purposes for which we are created. To God therefore should our thanks be given, that our existence had its origin amidst numberless local advantages; and when our hearts swell with a natural, and surely pardonable, exultation in the name of our country, let them also be warmed with gratitude towards the Lord, by whose destination we belong to this country.

For the due preservation of that order, without which the chief ends of human society could not be answered; (since without order, neither property nor person could be secure, as neither political, nor moral, nor religious advantages could be derived from the lawless assemblage of ungoverned multitudes;) for the due preservation of that order, it is the divine appointment, evidently manifested in the constitution and history of man through all ages, that in every kingdom, not absolutely barbarian, there should be† inequality of condition. That there should be high and low, rich and poor, in the same society, is a decree of the Almighty fixed and uniform, as that there should be young and old; disparity of circumstances is established by God's will on grounds as immovable, and on reasons as wise, as disparity of age. To repine under an arrangement which never can be altered so long as there subsists the same relation between causes and effects which is now ordained; to murmur that we cannot all have the same opulence, or power, or dignity, were as folly as culpable, and a dissatisfaction as unreasonable, as it would be to complain that the heavens did not always shed upon us the genial influence of warm suns and serene skies. Our wisdom and duty is to acquiesce in the general law of distinct ranks, in which man is formed to experience the greatest degree of happiness.

But submission of this kind to an universal appointment, by no means precludes the fair, just, and honest endeavours of individuals, to amend the condition, and rise from the rank in which

* See Forster's Observations made during a Voyage round the World, Sect. iv.

† See Aristot. *Polit. Polit.* 7. 8.

they are born. Industry in our calling, whatever it may be, is another law of our nature forcibly binding as resignation. Both are to be taken together: the talents which are given us must be diligently exerted; but the effect of such exertion must be left to the disposal of that over-ruling power which nothing human can possibly controul. If in the course of our labours we meet with prosperity, we have abundant cause to be thankful; thankful to friends, who have given us support, but more thankful to God, by whom those friends were raised up for us. Yet the language of the world is after another mode. We are loud in commending our own application; we estimate our services at a high value; we talk of our foresight, our conjectures, our calculations; we exult in what we term a lucky chance, a fortunate accident.

Humility and piety forbid self-arrangement, and direct the thinking mind to something higher than an issue merely fortuitous. They impel us indeed to omit no single circumstance, by which the duty of our station may be zealously and conscientiously discharged; but then, in every happy event, they prompt us to recollect, that from God came the powers which have enabled us to conceive prudent measures, from God came the success in which our enterprises have terminated; when therefore we would glory in our temporal concerns, we should glory in the Lord by whose Providence both the means and the end have been dispensed to us!

That which entitles man to distinguished superiority over the brute creation, is the faculty of reason. In the use of powers merely animal, man is confessedly inferior to many beasts of the field. But God, in having given him a mind capable of reason, has imparted that which is the foundation of man's dominion over creatures irrational, that which is the spring of all his necessary, useful, and ornamental arts, that which improves, adorns, and exalts his nature, above every species inhabiting this globe*, that

which discovers to him the existence of an Almighty Being, who alone formed the universe, that which points out to him the duties of gratitude and obedience towards the father of all men, and maker of all things!

The degrees in which the faculty of reason shows itself either more strongly or faintly, depend on an infinite variety of causes not at our own command. Difference in the proportion of those abilities which we call natural, and are altogether the immediate gifts of God, difference in education, difference in practice, difference in country, difference in climate; all these circumstances influence the mind with varieties of force, and produce varieties of effect in the actual exertion and general application of the reasoning faculty. But these differences can no more be avoided by man, than difference of soil, position, and produce, can be avoided by the earth. The mind of every man, indeed, commonly speaking, has by nature a capacity for improving its reasoning faculty; but whether that capacity shall receive proper aids, or to what extent it shall be carried if duly assisted, no one in the first instance can for himself choose. In the lowest state of degraded nature, man scarcely appears to have begun exerting his capacity; in a condition raised but little above the lowest, he is still found indolent, stupid, and insensible; in situations somewhat superior to these, his capacity extends to no wider limits than to the art of providing subsistence, and of defending himself against dangers. In countries civilized the means of instruction, the opportunities of mental exercise, leisure for invention, observation, and reflection, neither are nor can be given to all alike. And even if these advantages could be distributed in equal proportions, yet ardour of genius, strength of imagination, quickness of apprehension, and depth of penetration, could by no art of man be alike communicated. God is the first Creator of our mind, and on his will depends the disposal of us to situations where the capacity of the mind shall attain greater or less perfection in its faculty of reason. Does any possess extraordinary abilities?

* See Xenophon's Memorabilia, lib. i. c. 4. § 13.

He is gifted by God. Is any educated in useful learning? It is God who provides for him either parents or benefactors, by whose beneficence he is so instructed. Is any furnished with means of cultivating his mental powers more advantageously than others? The train of events which may have led to such opportunities, was directed by the counsel and permission of God. Are the country and climate where any is born, better* suited than others for exertions of the mind? It was God's appointment that in a region thus favourable he should happily exist. The previous circumstances which chiefly conduce to difference in the faculty of reason, being thus under God's direction, and gracious dispensations of his Providence, to his goodness should the first praise be ascribed, by those who have been enabled to improve their mind, and instead of that vanity which too usually tarnishes the beauty of superior attainments, should be adopted a humble sense of gratitude to the God who "giveth man understanding;" and an acknowledgment that in the divine blessing is the original cause, from which, to one man rather than another, are imparted greater measures of mental endowment.

That man should be religious, proceeds as much from the constitution of his nature, as that he should be social or imitative. Observation on man in present and past ages proves that he, and he alone of the beings in this world, is formed to practise religious duties. For however ignorant of religious principles the most barbarous savages may be, and however indifferent to religious service the presumptuous and conceited, the careless and dissipated in civilized nations may appear, yet these constitute but a comparatively small part of mankind; and, it would be equally false to conclude, either from the ignorance of the one, or the indifference of the other, against the general tendency of mankind to religion, as it would be to conclude that, because savages are wild, therefore

men are not born for society; and because thoughtless persons never reflect, therefore men are not born to follow reason. Arguing from experience founded on facts, we are convinced, beyond possibility of doubt, that God intended man to be a religious creature. Much of man's happiness depends on his cultivation of religious principles, and observance of religious duties; and this happiness will be greater or less, in proportion as the system of religion, which we may have embraced, is more or less pure. With respect to ourselves, we have a system calculated in every part of it to promote private and social happiness, by enforcing all that we can think or call virtue. Christianity sets forth to us, that there is an Almighty God, who will recompense every one in a future state, according to the goodness he has exercised in this life: that there is an Eternal Son, who intercedes for the return of God's favour to such as are sincerely penitent for transgressions: that there is a sanctifying spirit, who, by his influence on the soul, assists every one that devoutly and earnestly prays for help. We are encouraged in the first instance never to swerve from our duty, by consideration that the recompense will be proportioned to our degrees of perfection: we are then prevented from abandoning ourselves to despair after the commission of sin, by promise of pardon upon unfeigned repentance and actual relinquishing of wicked practices: and we are lastly assured, that divine aid will strengthen our natural weakness in the hour of temptation to do wrong, if we will but lift up our souls in earnest supplication to heaven! Nothing is here omitted, that can be done for the inducement of rational agents to live in the habits of virtue and piety. The rewards are distant, that man may act with a more free choice in determining on the line of conduct he will pursue. Pardon is given to repentance, that man may not, after he has done wrong, think it then unavailable to amend his life. Assistance spiritual is imparted to the suppliant, that his endeavours to be virtuous may be carried into effect. In essence so pure, in rites so plain, christianity bespeaks its divine

* See Aristot. Περὶ Πλάτ. 7. 7. Abbé du Bos. Part ii. c. 16, 17.

origin, and exceeds every system of religion that has hitherto appeared in the known world.

Under this system we are living; but by whose appointment? How comes it that we, like our pagan ancestors, are not sacrificing unto idols? Whence is it, that our children, like those of the Ammonites, do not pass through the fire to Moloch? From what cause does it ultimately proceed, that through a succession of ages the light of the gospel hath shined upon this nation, hath dispelled the darkness of gross superstition, hath banished all rites of horrid cruelty, hath established a mode of worship more spiritual than ceremonial? The dispensation of Providence, which ordained that Christianity should be preached here, neither we nor our ancestors devised: from the counsel, the mercy, and blessing of the Almighty it originated, that we should be called to a knowledge of the true God, and of his Christ, whom he sent to reform and redeem us. When therefore we recollect, as we often should recollect, the excellence of our religion, so infinitely superior to all others; when we glory, as with reason we may do, in being a people to whom are communicated divine truths, which from many regions of the globe are yet concealed; we should glory in the Lord, through whose peculiar favour the gospel was imparted to our forefathers, and by them has been delivered down to us. And thus much for advantages of a spiritual nature in a general view.

How far individually through his Christian course each man receives the aid of divine grace, every one, by comparing his own thoughts and actions with the precepts of the gospel, must judge for himself. That God gives ability, and that man has a great work to perform, are truths equally certain: but to what extent the divine grace operates, and in what degree the endeavours of man must be exerted, no one can determine for another, and perhaps few for themselves. From analogy of what is manifest in the natural world, where on different persons different bodily advantages are evidently bestowed; and from the language of Scripture also, which plainly intimates

that the Holy Spirit will add grace to some dispositions, but will forsake others; we may infer that there exists a difference in spiritual, no less than in corporeal endowments. Has any man a clearer conception of gospel evidences, a firmer faith in the gospel promises, a conscience more alive to the calls of religion, a more earnest solicitude to obey God, and a manner of thinking and acting more conformable with the dictates of temperance, justice, and piety; has any man these qualities in a measure beyond others? then he may be assured that the divine assistance has been communicated to him. Whether by the agency of second causes, or whether by direct influence on the soul, such assistance is communicated, still it is from the Lord that he derives such blessing, and his glory should be not in his own merits, but in that help which cometh from the Lord.

And now, upon a review of what has been said, it appears, that as man is to himself the original cause neither of the strength or health which he enjoys, nor of his being born in any particular place or country, nor of the circumstances which have concurred with his own labours to promote success, nor of the powers with which his mind is endowed, nor of his being enlightened by Christianity, nor of his ability to live conformably with the gospel; it follows, that in every stage of his life he is dependent on the Supreme disposer, director, and controller of all things.

The duties arising from this state of dependence are, gratitude towards the giver of the blessings which at present we enjoy, and prayer for such a continuance of divine favour, as may seem to God's unerring wisdom best calculated for our general happiness.

It is farther evident, that the method of God's Providence towards man is, commonly speaking, to impart capacity for improving his condition. Thus in the faculties of his body and mind, and in advantages temporal and spiritual, man, among a civilised people, by due exertion of the capacity allotted him, and proper employment of the means offered him, is enabled by God to raise his nature from a fallen and degraded to a

renovated and comparatively dignified state.

The duties arising from this dispensation are, thanksgiving to God proportionable to the abilities and opportunities with which each person is furnished, and diligence in making the utmost improvement possible of the several talents with which he is entrusted. God is a moral governor, and will do right: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required*."

Lastly, it is evident, that as man is formed for the exercise of reason, the invention of arts, the comforts of society, the observance of moral duties, the knowledge, practice, and rewards of religious service, he has abundant reason on these accounts to glory in his pre-eminence above the brute creation, conscious to himself that his species is peculiarly favoured by the goodness of his Creator: yet at the same time he has greater reason for referring the ultimate glory to the Lord, since by Him, and through Him, are either given or denied, either continued or withdrawn, all the faculties which are the ornaments of our nature.

SERMON CLIX.

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

On the different Sentiments which are entertained at different Periods of our Age.

I COR. xiii. 11.

When I was a Child, I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought as a Child; but when I became a Man, I put away childish Things.

THE immediate design of the Apostle in the use of these expressions, was by an apt similitude forcibly to represent, that whatever might be his knowledge of

the Christian dispensation during the present confined state of his intellectual faculties, yet, comparatively speaking, it was but little better than mere ignorance, when contrasted with that more clear and more perfect understanding of Divine truths, which would enlighten his mind when its powers were more enlarged in a future life, the concerns of which would be altogether spiritual. But the words may be taken by us in a literal as well as a figurative sense; and we may first apply them to the purpose of remarking the different* conceptions of the same objects, which men of serious reflection entertain at different periods of their age.

The law, which regulates and pervades this system of the universe, to which we belong, is that nothing connected with it should be at once† perfect. Accordingly we see that mature improvement is the result of progressive‡ advances, carried on from beginnings commonly slight and inconsiderable, and pursued to the utmost extent of refinement, which the condition of things now existing, and the peculiar qualities of the object to be improved, are capable of admitting. In the works of Divine Creation, as in those of human art, the force of this law is equally observable. Whether we look to the inanimate or animate parts of the globe, we shall find this decree operating with uniform influence§. Before we can gather the full ear of corn, we must patiently wait to see first the tender blade, and then the

* The Spanish proverb says, *a wise man changes his mind, a fool never will.*

SPECTAT. No. 78.

† See Bp. BUTLER's Analogy, Part II. ch. iv. p. 281, 282. edit. 6th.

‡ Omnium enim rerum principia parva sunt; sed suis progressionibus usa augentur: nec sine causa: in primo enim ortu inest tenetitas et mollities quedam, ut nec res videre optumas nec agere possint: virtutis enim beatæque vitæ (que duo maxumè expetenda sunt) series lumen adparet. Multo etiam serius ut pland, qualia sint, intelligantur. CIC. de Finibus, l. v. 21.

§ It is plainly *not* the method of nature, in other parts of the creation, to obtain her ends *instantaneously*. See "Divine Benevolence asserted," by Dr. BALGUY, p. 71.

* St. Luke xii. 48.

more firm stalk*. Before we can pluck the fruit of a tree, the tender plant must be converted into a robust trunk. For every species of animal existence, whether in the air, the earth, or the waters, a similar progression from the imbecility of first production to the comparative strength of full growth, is universally ordained. The earth itself performs its revolutions, not so as that every part should at once have broad noon; but that dawn of light, and morn should precede the mid-day. Let these illustrations be now applied to man. As in his body†, so in his intellect, he arrives at maturity by successive progress. In his youth, the senses, the memory, the imagination, are the characteristic faculties. At the earliest period of manhood, reflection on what the senses have imparted, the memory retained, and the imagination conceived, begins to operate. Habits of reflection lead on to judgment; and judgment, as the effect which ultimately proceeds from the due exercise of abilities antecedently acquired, directs man to form his opinions on subjects important to his happiness: such are, pleasurable amusements; condition of life; the actions of all persons with whom he is more immediately connected; the civil polity, by which his person, his freedom, and his property are to be secured; and the truths of that religion which claims observance, as being the revelation of God's will to man. Whatever

has reference to either of these concerns, most commonly engages, and indeed most justly demands his attention.

In his conceptions then of the manner in which his leisure hours may be spent agreeably; of condition in life; of conduct in individuals; of civil institutions; and of Christian doctrines; it is probable he will experience considerable changes through the progress of his age: and this, not from any instability of mind; but from having taken a more enlarged view of all subjects that have occurred to his thoughts; from more thorough acquaintance with all circumstances; from more extensive information, deeper reflection, greater strength for conclusive reasoning, and firmer grounds for solid judgment*.

In nothing does the opinion of mature age more widely differ from that of youth, than with respect to the pursuits of pleasurable amusement. In the ardour of early days, the mind seeks with avidity every object that is new, every scene that is animating, every engagement that can call into action the bodily powers: and whatever is not recommended by novelty, whatever requires repose, or demands the application of intellect, appears then to be dull, insipid, and uninteresting. But follow the same mind to that time of life, when the habits either of professional learning, or of active employment, operate with the strongest force. To the man of letters disengaged from weightier concerns, either the works of imagination, or sober reflection, or social converse, amidst the calm serenity of undisturbed quiet, afford the most exquisite delight†: and the man of business

* In the first period of life, children are not capable of distinguishing right from wrong in human conduct; neither are they capable of abstract reasoning in matters of science. Their judgment of moral conduct, as well as their judgment of truth, advances by insensible degrees, like the corn and the grass.

We may observe a similar progress in the faculties of the mind: for there is a wonderful analogy among all the works of God, from the least even to the greatest.

Dr. Reid on the "Active Powers of Man,"

Ess. 3. c. viii. p. 253. ed. 1788.

† *Natura igitur corpus quidem hominis sic et gennit et formavit, ut alia in primo ortu perficeret, alia progrediente ætate fingeret.*

Animum autem reliquis rebus ita perfecit ut corpus.—Quod autem in homine præstantissimum atque optimum est, id deseruit, etsi dedit talem mentem quæ omnem virtutem jam accipere posset—sed virtutem ipsam inchoavit: nihil amplius.

Cicero Fin. l. v. 21.

* Ἡ ἄρα τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν πολλῶν ἐστὶ πειρὰς τελευταῖα ἐπιγνῶσις, says Longinus (sect. 6). He might with equal truth have added, καὶ τῶν πράξεων.

† Neither ignorant of life, nor morose in disposition was that accomplished moral poet, who hath expressed the change of his mind from a love of lighter pleasures to a relish for others of a graver cast, in these different passages:

*O rus! quando ego te aspiciam! quandoque
hæbit
Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno, et inertibus
horis*

Ducere sollicitæ jucunda obliuia vitæ!

Hor. 2 Sat. vi. 60.

finds his greatest relief in rural retirement and domestic comfort. To each of them his own simple method of recreation is much more satisfactory, than many of the modes by which intervals of leisure are often filled up, at the expence of inconvenient trouble and perhaps injured health to those, whom the strength and sprightliness of youth have forsaken.

The conceptions of young minds are generally erroneous, in mistaking the causes from which the happiness of external condition arises. Captivated by the parade, and beguiled by the ease of opulence, they conclude these to be the sources of felicity; and therefore annex ideas of supreme enjoyment to the high rank in which opulence abounds. And judging only from the labour and frugality incident to other classes, they form an opinion, that even the middle order of society must be less happy than the higher. But a more true estimate of wealth and situation leads us to more just conclusions. High rank hath indeed the *means* of unspeakable happiness; for it hath power to do good, superfluity to relieve the distressed, opportunity for enjoying rational pleasures, and what is of no small value, ability to be independent. If however to the possessor of these *means*, there be wanting a *mind* capable of applying them to purposes, that will promote the ends for which affluence should serve, purposes from which alone can arise mental satisfaction; in that case rank and its glittering

appendages add nothing to human happiness. Much less does exemption from useful employment tend to that effect. Weariness and disgust not unfrequently obtrude themselves on him, who wants occupation * either of body or mind. On the contrary, a cheerful and contented disposition is usually found in those, who divide their time between rest and labour. Commonly speaking then, it is not so much from the condition itself, as from the *right use* of it that happiness arises to high rank. And upon a general view of the middle, compared with higher ranks, perhaps it may be truly said, that where in the middle rank there is competency the fruit of industry, and where the heart is right to God and man, pure from evil intention towards any person existing, erect above mean and abject thoughts, and ready to perform kind offices on all occasions; in that case, there is little, if any disparity with respect to real satisfaction, on the side of exalted station.

Of actions palpably vicious and dishonest, a mind not corrupt will uniformly retain the same opinion. Whatever in itself is morally bad, must stand condemned by us at every age of our life, if our passions have not grossly perverted our reason, and if we ourselves are not depraved. It is not then of cases notoriously wicked that we are now speaking: of them there can be in us no diversity of sentiment. But the common occurrences of every day present to our observation an infinitude of actions, which, if taken abstractedly and without reference to any other circumstances, are of a nature indifferent; and the rectitude, or impropriety of them, depends entirely on various considerations to be regarded in the person who acts. The occasion, in its full extent, to which he must suit his measures; the principles from which his purpose originated; the views with

Ergo ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbe removi,

Quid prius illustrem satyris, musæque pedestri ?
2 Sat. vi. 16.

Non eadem est ætas; non mens. 1 Epist. i. 4.
Nimirum sapere est abjectis utile nugis,

Et tempestivum pueris concedere ludum :

Ac non verba sequi fidebus modulanda Latinis,
Sed veræ numerosque modosque eliacere vitæ.

2 Ep. ii. 141.

See also 1 Sat. vi. 104.—1 Epist. vii. 35.—1 Epist. x. 8.—1 Epist. xiv. 16.—Yet however much he preferred his own pursuits, he censures not those of another, unless immoral or out of character: but with his usual good humour gives this advice:
Nec tua laudabis studia; aut aliena reprædes.

1 Epist. xviii. 39.

allowing no one to indulge himself in that conceit and spleen, against which men of retired habits should particularly guard themselves,

* Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat,
Aut quid conscias ipse animus se fortè remordet

Desidiosè ætatem agere.

LUCR.

See CICERO de Finibus, l. 5. s. 20, 21.

See DR. BALGUY'S "Divine Benevolence asserted," p. 36.

which he adopted this or that manner of forwarding his design; the means with which he was furnished for executing it; the difficulties with which he had to contend in his progress; the particular obligations of duty which either his station, or age, or profession, might require of him; and perhaps many other minute points, which, however immaterial they might appear to cursory observers, may nevertheless be of great moment to the party immediately concerned; all these particulars must be taken into the account as the probable grounds on which his conduct was directed, before we can pronounce the common actions of any one near us to be either praise-worthy or blameable*. But in the season of ardour and inexperience, we are prejudiced by first views; and alike impatient and incapable of making inquiry into the intrinsic merits or demerits of what we perceive done, both in affairs of moment and in common behaviour we often censure what deserves commendation, and as often applaud what should rather be reprehended. Thus, eager to pursue our own inclinations, and incompetent to estimate the blessings of education, we are not much disposed† to regard with affection those who either check our vicious tendencies, or who enforce diligence in the acquisition of learning: the greater portion of our favour is bestowed on others, who suffer us to persist in follies, without admonition, and to misapply our time and talents, without reproof. Discerning not the bounds, which separate liberality from profusion, to the squanderings of the prodigal we give the name of generosity, and deem the bounties of the prudent no marks of

benevolence. Alive to resentment, and hasty for revenge, we annex the idea of heroism to implacability, and impute forgiveness of injuries to want of spirit. If we can bring ourselves to somewhat like reconciliation, yet as we are neither habituated to the governing of our anger, nor enlarged in our knowledge and views of things, we suffer trifles to renew our animosity‡, and think the same irritability laudable in others. Little conversant with affairs of the world, and as yet untaught that every end requires corresponding means conducive to it; that such means it is not always in our power to command; that the same object wears not to all persons alike the same appearance; that on many occasions the prejudices, the tempers, the humours of others must be consulted, and suitable opportunities for making impressions on their minds be attentively observed and seasonably embraced; untaught in this complication of human concerns, which usually retards dispatch, and frequently creates invincible impediment to the accomplishing of our wishes; through self-confidence and sanguine hope we are assured success would have attended us, where persons more judicious have either abandoned the undertaking, or have experienced an unfavourable event. In the love of truth being ourselves ingenuous, but in our manner of shewing it often intemperate, the rude and uncivil we call open and sincere, and mistake disgusting sourness for plain honesty. Though we are prone to treat with ridicule the foibles of others, yet we are provoked by retaliation, as if it were an insult; for, through want of self-inspection we are ignorant of ourselves, and we forget that he who retorts was not the aggressor.

Such then being some of the misconceptions, under which with regard to the actions of other men we frequently labour in the days of our youth, let us now consider the effect which advancing years very commonly produce on our judgment.

* Πάντα πράγματα δύο ἔχει λαβὰς; "Audi alteram partem;" "There are two-sides to every question;" are proverbial sayings, replete with good sense, and founded on accurate observation and practical knowledge of human concerns. And happy is it both for themselves and the community, when the tempers of men incline them to seize the right handle; to bear the better part; and acquiesce in the more favourable side.

† The expressions of Horace, "Monitoribus asper;"—"Prodigus avis," A. P. 163, 164; and of Aristotle, ἐφοδύμοι—ἐν ἡλικίᾳ—φιλογίαντες;—συμπαιδιῶν. Rhet. 2. 12. cd, Oxf. are here illustrated.

‡ Sen calidus sanguis, seu serum jascitia venit:

Indomitâ cervicē feros.

Hen. 1 Epist. iii. 33.

Observing that inordinate indulgence of appetite is destructive to health, to understanding, to reputation; and finding that proficiency in no art or science can be attained but by efforts of industrious application, we recall to our memories, and respect as our best friends, those who curbed our passions, when they required the strongest check; and who impelled us to assiduity in cultivating our abilities. Circumscribed as many are by the limits of mediocrity in temporal possessions, and unavoidably obliged as all are to adapt their expences to the measure of their property, we are sensible that frugality is the foundation of generosity; and that frequently the giver of a small donation is more truly liberal, than he who without thought and without inconvenience more largely contributes. From having felt the inquietude of mind and disorder of the reasoning faculties, which anger has occasioned in our own bosoms; from having noticed the extravagant and absurd acts, by which persons resentful degrade themselves in the estimation of the more moderate; from having found it a work infinitely more difficult, and therefore more manly to govern, rather than obey the impetuosity of our temper; from having discovered that a disposition unknowing how to relent is odious in a society of civilized manners, and suitable to none but a savage barbarian; from a sense too, that we ourselves often need forgiveness, but that pardon we cannot expect, if none we grant; from all these considerations we love the person, who with patience will endure provocations, and on easy terms will consent to reconciliation. When obstacles in the way of some desirable end have frequently impeded the career, in which we fancied we could proceed without difficulty or hindrance; and when we have been taught that others, no less than ourselves, are tenacious of some preconceived opinions, influenced by some habitual disposition, and fluctuating in their inclination; we are then convinced that however excellent and advisable a measure might be in itself, yet frequently it is not practicable, and therefore must be relinquished, from a cause which neither wisdom nor zeal can control, the necessity of the

case. If we have learnt it not from reflection creditable to our understanding, we shall at least have been made to know it from the resentment we have provoked, that truth and frankness; if they mean to be useful, must in their application be discreet, and in their language delicate. Self-knowledge will at last have taught us, that we need not look beyond ourselves to find instances of folly: and that unless we would bring on ourselves and hear with unconcern, reproach from others, we must forbear taking the unwarrantable liberty of ridiculing them. And thus having been ourselves placed under a greater variety of circumstances, and having attended to the modes of acting which in a diversity of cases we have been compelled by those circumstances to adopt; having moreover learnt that men in general, constituted as they are of passions the same in kind, though different in degree, do in similar situations act nearly on similar principles; we are commonly disposed to judge with candour and to pronounce condemnation on no man, till we have heard the reasons of his conduct fully explained, and the grounds of such reasons impartially disclosed*.

As thus we change our sentiments on the actions of individuals, we correct them no less on concerns of civil policy. For, we apply the same candour in judging of public as of private measures; and conceive that were the motives for such measures understood, the authors of them would be justified. In our earlier years we are totally unacquainted with the "secret lets and difficulties, which in public proceedings are innu-

* Changing but the terms, we may adopt for judging of moral conduct the critic's rule for examining poetry and painting.

— Know well each ancient's proper character,
His fable, subject, scope, in every page,
Religion, country, genius of his age.

Pope's Ess. I. on Criticism, v. 119.
Some figures monstrous and misshap'd appear,
Consider'd singly, or beheld too near;
Which but proportion'd to their light and place
Due distance reconciles to form and grace.

Pope's Ess. I. on Criticism, 171.
According to this remark of a master critic,
Ut pictura poesis erit; quæ, si propius stes,
Te capiet magis; et quædam, si longius abtes.
Hor. A. P. v. 361.

merable and inevitable.* but when observation of facts hath made us sensible, how arduous a task it is to secure obedience to the laws, in a system which combines different and opposite principles, and which, though it supports order, yet subjects every individual to the least restraint that can possibly be laid on him consistently with the ends and purposes of civil society; when experience hath taught us this knowledge, we do not hastily and for slight imperfections "go about to persuade the multitude, that they are not so well governed as they ought to be."†

Let us now consider the influence of mature age on some opinions of a religious nature.

At that period when they first begin to think of religion, many, forming their judgment from the simplicity of Christian Elements, are led to conceive, that for the understanding of the Sacred Writings nothing more is necessary, than the knowledge of words in the Hebrew and Greek tongues. They have it yet to discover, that if they would learn to interpret the whole body of Scripture, by which Christian elements are introduced, established, and illustrated, they must become acquainted with particulars, various in kind, and wide in comprehension. The idiomatic phraseology of the languages in which the Scriptures are written; the object of types and application of antitypes; the views and completion of prophecies; the scope and connexion of the Old and New Testament; the manners, customs, opinions, times, and places, to which allusion is respectively made in the several passages to be explained; all these circumstances demand consideration, before a complete and faithful exposition can be given: added to which must be a readiness in comparing texts that are to be collated, and ability in thence drawing a just conclusion. He who is content with hastily and superficially perusing the words only of Scripture, will long remain ignorant of the many qualifications requisite for the forming of a biblical scholar, and must be incompetent to the work of interpretation. But when the mind hath begun

to investigate the sense of Scripture, it then perceives its inability to make any effectual progress without continual reference to those rules of criticism, which are suitable to the style and genius of holy writ, and without the concurrent aid of philology in all its branches. Experience of this nature creates in us reluctance either to propose, or adopt novel opinions concerning first principles in religion; and renders us properly cautious how we reject interpretations given by men, who were known to have devoted their time and talents for many successive years, to the sole employment of examining and illustrating the Scriptures.

Again; to the study of the Scriptures others come, bringing with them indeed serious attention; but through that intellectual presumption, which attends inexperience, they bring also a disposition to adopt no doctrine, which is not perfectly within the comprehension of their own reason. Long reflection however teaches us that Revelation professes to communicate more than reason could have made known to us; and that God and his ways, which are the subjects of Revelation, are far above the capacity of man. Man is finite, God infinite in understanding. Man sees but some few years; the sight of God extends through eternity. Man can argue only on human principles; God may have counsels and motives for acting, not indeed irreconcilable, but impenetrable to human wisdom. Man is limited in all his powers; but God can do all things which imply not contradiction. Man can give but little account of his own nature†; the nature of divine essence he is utterly incapable of comprehending. From not having observed that the compass of reason cannot be enlarged beyond a certain point; and from not having considered the ineffable disparity

* Such for instance as those contained in the "*Philologiae Sacrae Libri Quinque*," of GLASSIUS.

See also Dr. MACKNIGHT'S Essay, "*Of the right Interpretation of Scripture*," in his "*New Literal Translation of all the Apostolical Epistles*," vol. iv. p. 383. with the original text.

† See Dr. RAY on the "*Intellectual Powers of Man*," Essay 2. c. i. p. 75.

* Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, B. i. s. 1.

† Hooker, *ibid*.

between God and man, between things divine and human; many at their first application to the study of the gospel have received the doctrines of atonement and of the Trinity, with degrees of doubt, because they could not understand how divine justice could be satisfied with the death of an innocent person; or how the same essence could be so communicated, as that the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, should be but One. Patient investigation, however, at length teaches them, that it is not required of them to understand *how* these things can be. God reveals the facts, and therefore they cannot but be true. And repeated experience that we believe most firmly many other facts, for which however we cannot account, convinces us that it is entirely consistent with reason to believe the gospel doctrines, though by man inexplicable. Thus; that the world exists, we have ocular demonstration; and that God created it, we can prove to moral certainty; but *how* his Almighty word could call into existence things which before had no being; *why* He formed the world after the manner we now behold it, or *why* He formed it at all: these are questions which cannot be explained, nor indeed are ever asked by sound reasoners. With respect to the doctrines of atonement and the Trinity, the case is similar. That these doctrines exist in the gospel, we are persuaded by the interpretation of many passages to that effect. We believe that He, who delivered those doctrines, spake what in his superior wisdom He knew to be true; the doctrines themselves, therefore, we admit on that account; but *how* or *why* the death of Christ is thus efficacious; or *how* the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are united in one Godhead, are questions we do not pretend or think it necessary to solve, because Revelation hath not explained them, nor hath God required of us such knowledge."

It is one part of wisdom to be sensible of our ignorance; and one mark of courage not to fear confessing that of some things we are ignorant. In the pride of youth, we neither feel that our understanding is limited; nor, if we did feel it, would jealousy, lest our abilities should be depreciated, permit us to

acknowledge any imperfection of that nature, even though it be unavoidable. When, however, our researches have often been obstructed by utter impossibility to unfold primary causes; and when we have learnt to think it more pusillanimous to pretend having powers which man cannot possess, than freely to own that with many particulars of an abstruse kind we are unacquainted; we hesitate not to reply, "*we do not know*," when the reasons which made the death of Christ a condition of mercy towards man, and when the essential nature of Deity are asked of us. To God's infinite wisdom and unerring word we refer all such difficulties: under conviction of the one and sanction of the other, we resign our former prejudices; and believe the doctrines revealed unto mankind assuredly for no other purpose, than to increase their happiness by improving their morals and their religious knowledge.

Having thus far noticed and endeavoured to account for the different conceptions, which many persons have entertained at different periods of their age, we may now briefly remark on the figurative sense in the words of the apostle; by which he would intimate the increase of knowledge which will enlighten our souls, when we are raised to a life immortal. That such increase will *probably* ensue, we have reason to expect from analogy. For, not only are men more intelligent than children, but generations of men become wiser as they advance in succession. Hence we find, that of the objections†, which the disputers of old brought forward, as irreconcilable with the divine attributes,

* See Bp. CONYBEARE'S Sermon on Mysteries, in vol. iii. ENCHIRIDION THEOLOGICUM.

† "Had the epicurean atheists of old, or the forementioned modern astronomer, duly examined these things, they would not have so rashly pronounced concerning the *faultiness* of the Creation; they would have seen on the foregoing principles, that what upon their hypothesis is so *irregular and uncertain*, is in reality most *uniform and determinate*: and that all their complaints are founded upon their ignorance of the true system of the world." See "Enquiry into the Cause and Origin of Evil," by Dr. JOHN CLARKE, p. 125, ed. 1720. See also Dr. BENTLEY'S "Confutation of Atheism," Sermon 8. s. 10.

many proceeded entirely from ignorance of facts, which have since been discovered by physical inquiries: and of the evils, which in past centuries the stupidity made to the Scriptures, many were founded in want* of that critical and historical knowledge, which has been since more widely diffused through the whole body of Christians.

Moreover, from the manner in which God by gradual prophecies, at first obscure, then somewhat more plain, and finally distinct, revealed the coming of the Messiah; and from the order in which Christianity, the better dispensation, succeeded the Jewish economy, which was but a preparatory introduction to a more excellent covenant; from these methods of proceeding in the divine administration we might conclude, that degrees of improved knowledge in truths respecting the nature of God and the means appointed for man's redemption will hereafter be communicated in that state of existence to which we are progressively approaching.

To the same conclusion are also led, by consideration of the comparative difference which necessarily subsists between a state imperfect and perfect. Our present condition is imperfect, and to it are adapted all our faculties†. The mind now perceives through organs, which even in their utmost vigour are but limited in their powers; and which by various accidents lose the force even of those limited powers. Our future condition will be perfect; in that we shall probably be endued with more clear perception through the means of bodily organs, proportionably improved; and as the powers of perception, so also those of our understanding, may be infinitely more enlarged.

Such grounds for hoping this will be the case, we have even from analogy. But there is still a foundation on which

we may more firmly rely; it is the declaration of St. Paul, assuring us that hereafter we shall discern spiritual things with the utmost clearness, or, to use his own emphatical language, "face to face." And a greater than St. Paul hath given us encouragement, to prepare our souls by the cultivating of right affections: even Christ himself hath solemnly pronounced, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God‡."

The reflections to be made on what has been said are briefly these:

Petulant contradiction, vain arrogance, and bold assumption create disgust in every season of life: but more particularly when predominant in that age which, from unavoidable inexperience, is most subject to error, and which therefore should be docile and open to conviction.

The degree of our misconception will probably be less, and the time of its duration proportionably shorter, accordingly as greater care to guard us from false opinions has been bestowed on us in the course of our education. Of what vast importance then is it, that elementary principles of the purest kind should be assiduously‡ inculcated! And how unspeakably valuable is that education which teaches to youthful days nothing that manhood must labour to unlearn!

However the censorious may be inclined through malevolence to attribute a change of sentiments to improper motives, yet, in the estimation of candid judges habituated to reflection, it sullies no man's honour to abandon a mistaken and adopt a right principle; it degrades no man's understanding to acknowledge he has thought erroneously, but that after mature inquiry he has altered § his

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† St. Mat. v. 8.

‡ Hoc opus, hoc studium, parvi properemus et ampli,

SI PATRIÆ VOLUMUS, SI NOBIS VIVERE CARI.

Hor. i. Epist. 3. 18.

§ Beatum, cui etiam in senectute contigerit, ut sapientiam, veraque opinionones adsequi possit. Cic. de Fin. v. 21. from PLATO.

For a striking instance of ingenuous confession and manly decision, see Bp. HORSLEY'S Tracts, p. 260. edit. 1789.

Bp. WATSON says of I. A. CLERIC, "When his judgment was matured by age, he was ashamed

* In MICHAELIS'S Introduction to the New Testament; JORTIN'S Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i.; GRAY'S Key to the Old Testament; and HARMER'S Observations on divers Passages of Scripture; the reader will find this assertion proved true.

† See Dr. REID, on the "Intellectual Powers of Man," Essay 2. c. i. p. 76, 77, 80. 105 ed. 1785.

opinions : for very little do they answer the purpose of increasing age, who become not usefully wiser, as they grow older.

If after long experience and better information we have been so happy as to correct our judgment, yet let us not thence forget there was a time when, to our sorrow, we ourselves were differently persuaded; nor let us be so uncandid as to make no allowance for the errors of persons still deceived, errors in which ourselves perhaps were once involved*.

Neither with respect to the injudicious sentiments and imprudent words of those, who have afterwards perceived and lamented their folly, let our memory be retentive to so malignant a purpose, as to treasure up the language of their former indiscretion for a ground of obloquy† and an occasion of ridicule. "Reproach not a man that turneth from sin‡," says the son of Sirach, prudently and humanely. But if even sins forsaken should no longer be recollected, surely errors that have been amended should be buried in oblivion. Ill indeed does it become man to reproach his fellow-creature with past misconceptions: for whatever may be our progress in thinking rightly on many subjects, still ignorance of others without number is inseparable from human nature through the whole of this life.

It remains for our existence in a future state, that our ignorance should be gradually removed: and among other blessings reserved for the just and good, it is

probably one, that there should be extended to them a continual progression* in attainments spiritual and intellectual. This is a recompence which every one who loves God and virtue, sanctity and knowledge, will labour to obtain: and "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled†."

SERMON CLX.

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

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The Consequences of Actions are to be considered.

ECCLESIASTICUS vii. 36.

Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.

IN the exercise either of liberal or mechanic arts, it is usual with those who practise them to form in their minds some plan of the work intended, before they begin to execute; and to contemplate in imagination‡ the effect which will be produced by the particular mode of proceeding they mean to adopt. It were to be wished that all men would thus deliberate on concerns of a moral nature; and that before they begin any single act, more particularly before they enter on a course of actions, they would seriously ask themselves in what it must terminate.

of what he had written on the subject (of Genesis) in his younger years; he made a public recantation of his error, by annexing to his Commentary on Genesis, a Latin Dissertation concerning Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, and his design in composing it."

Apology for the Bible, p. 43.

* The Manichæans were far enough from being heretics of the better sort: yet Augustin, addressing himself to them, treats them with lenity and compassion. He had been one of them himself, and knew how hard it was to shake off inveterate errors and prejudices.

Dr. JORRIN'S "Discourses concerning the Christian Religion." Dis. I. p. 73. ed. 4th.

† Veterum quidam culpam intempestive obicere, in die et alienis erroribus petulanter usulantis animi est.

FRISINGEMII Suppl. Livii, xii. 12.

‡ Ecclesiasticus viii. 5.

* For any thing that appears, there may be in the human mind powers and faculties equal to those of the highest angels, which, in the future state, when the soul is united to its glorified body, will display themselves in an admirable manner; agreeably to our Lord's declaration, Matt. xiii. 43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

Dr. MACKNIGHT'S Ess. 7. v. ii.

"New Literal Translation."

† St. Matt. v. 6.

‡ Facile quoque ex jam dictis evincitur, neminem unquam Artificem manum operi cum fructu admovisse, nisi prius vivam Totius Collocationis imaginem animo suo haberit inscriptam.

JUNIUS de Pictura Veterum, l. iii. 5. 4.

The season indeed for making this inquiry, is not the hour in which the passions are imperious. With such violence do they agitate the mind, that they impel it to overlook all consequences, and by any means to accomplish the object of its wishes, regardless of what may thence ensue. Intervals of calm and sober repose are the proper periods for meditation: in them we may recollect, from example and precept; what different ends must usually follow either a right or wrong line of conduct, and we may previously fix in our hearts some determined resolutions, which may be helpful to us when we come to struggle with temptations.

And herein the great advantage of the Sabbath, and the utility of discourses framed for instruction, obviously appear. By affording rest from worldly employments, the Sabbath gives leisure for self-examination; for reflecting at pauses not far distant on our past actions; for comparing our manners with the rules prescribed by the gospel; for marking the particulars in which we have deviated from the laws of morality and religion; and for proposing amendment of what has been done amiss, in the future progress of our lives. And to these means of moral improvement most highly conducive must be discourses, which teach the ignorant to know their duty; which to the well-informed recall truths they had before learned; which awaken all to a sense of right, and animate them to persevere in habits of temperance, justice, and piety, by consideration of that end which awaits us all, the state of future rewards and punishment proportioned to our good or evil actions done in this life present.

Whenever then our mind is undisturbed by passions, and especially on those more solemn days; the ordinances of which are designed and calculated to encourage reflection, we shall do well to strengthen our love of virtue by premonishing ourselves of the evil consequences which proceed from vice. On the present occasion be this our employment; on which let us now enter.

The first duty of man is to the God that made him. By reason we are led to know there is a God; by gratitude

we are bound to thank Him; by love to adore Him; by fear to obey Him; by self-regard, as we value the continuance of divine favour, we are prompted to offer unto him our prayers*. And they that on their hearts have thus engrafted a sense of pious and moral obligation towards God, have laid the deepest and firmest foundation† of right conduct on all occasions in which moral good or evil is concerned. But pass from them to others, who live as though there were no God in the world. If they are in the higher or middle rank of society, they indulge, without regard to conscience or even decency, the inclinations which lead them to some favourite vices. Insensible alike to the infamy which they stamp on their own character, and to the injury done, perhaps irreparably, to those who are corrupted by them, they ruin innocence in other families; and into their own houses by bad example introduce immoral practices, the effects of which are calamitous to their children or domestics. Thus instead of laying a foundation for esteem and happiness to their posterity and dependents, by directing them in the ways of prudence and piety, they entail the discredit and miseries which arise from debauched courses. In this manner act many of those, who being in affluent or competent circumstances presume to erect themselves as superior to the duties and restraints of religion.

If in a lower condition of life we look

* Many of the arguments used by Socrates, partly with Aristodemus, and partly with Euthydemus, on these important subjects, deserve the serious attention of the learned reader. The discoveries even of natural religion are such in many respects, as to leave men of no religion absolutely without excuse.

Xenophon's Memorabilia, l. i. c. 4. and l. iv. c. 3.

† Striking is the reflection, with which Xenophon concludes the account given of the dialogue holden by Socrates with Aristodemus, on the existence and providence of the Gods.

"In my opinion, conversation of this kind influenced those, who had intercourse with him, to avoid actions impious, unjust, and base, not only when they were in the sight of men, but even when they were alone: for they would be persuaded, that not a single thing they did could escape the notice of the Gods."

Xen. Mem. l. i. c. iv. 19.

among persons, who habituate themselves to neglect religious ordinances, we shall find they have commonly all the vices of the more wealthy, without adequate means by which to gratify their depraved inclinations. Idleness leads them to drunkenness and profligacy; drunkenness and profligacy bring them to want; want urges them to dishonesty; and dishonesty is punished by a premature and ignominious death. Such then being the fruits of irreligion in every station of life, it becomes those who would consult their own greater happiness, and who wish either to procure the regard or promote the benefit of society, to cultivate a disposition for rational piety, and declare to the world their faith in God, by assembling themselves in a public manner for the purpose of divine worship.

Next to God, parents claim our duties;* and among these duties, obedience is not the least. The discharge of filial obedience has seldom caused repentance; but the neglect of it has frequently been productive of sorrow. The years of youth must necessarily be years of ignorance and inexperience: maxims of discretion cannot yet have been collected, and knowledge of life cannot yet have been learned.† In these, however, as in other respects, whatever is defective in their sons and daughters, parents are able and anxious to supply: and happy are they who avail themselves of such faithful and affectionate guides. But often there predominate in young minds an impatience‡ of control, a contempt of advice, a perverseness of will, which hurries them into the very follies they are cautioned to avoid. Mark, however, the end of petulance, presumption, and obstinacy. To fill that station, for which the parent has long endeavoured to prepare him, as the son neither applies his attention, nor conforms his inclination, so he acquires no ability. Those means of support and improvement, to furnish which perhaps the parent hath often denied himself many innocent pleasures

and desirable comforts, are thrown away on pursuits either of senseless extravagance or of wanton profligacy. And when that period arrives, in which the man is to take his part in the active duties of social life, he becomes contemptible, because he has neither knowledge, nor industry, nor prudence to recommend him. Such is the usual fruit of disobedience to parents.

The divine precept, which in express terms commands obedience to parents, does also by implication enjoin that similar duty be paid towards persons, who by the protection they afford us, and the authority they bear over us, stand in the place of parents: such as magistrates, who are our civil parents. Religion and law are in their nature inseparably united. Their principles are the same; their object is the same; they mutually co-operate to make men good, that they may thence make them happy; and thus both show their origin to be from God, the fountain of all goodness and happiness. Therefore, generally speaking, the best and most judicious of men are the firmest supporters of religion and law; and none but bad or mistaken persons will encourage disobedience to the dictates of either. The civil magistrate is the representative and minister of law. His province is to secure the peaceable enjoyment of the most invaluable blessings to every member of society. So long then as he confines himself within the limits of that power, with which the community has entrusted him, disobedience to the civil magistrate is an offence against public good, which deserves and receives condign punishment inflicted by vindictive justice. And as the safety of every person is more or less endangered by the outrages which are committed in defiance of the magistrate, who is the interpreter and enforcer of the law; so in duty to himself and society at large, every person is bound to exert himself in bringing to justice the violators of law, and the disobedient to lawful governors. Observe then, as every individual is by so many spectators, who are all deeply interested to restrain illegal conduct, let no man presume to disobey the magistrate, in hopes of impunity.

* On this subject, see Xenophon's Memorabilia, l. ii. c. 2.

† Temeritas est vjdelicti forpntis etatis.
Cic. de Sen. & vi.

‡ Monitoribus asper. Hor.

From parents and magistrates, our duties extend to the whole compass of social life; differing in kind, according to the relations we bear to the several members, with whom we are connected. But there is one rule of universal application: it is, that we injure no one, neither in his own person, nor in the person of her who should be dearest to him, and is most closely united with him; nor in his property; nor in his character: and in proportion as this general law is violated by us, we are in danger of bringing on ourselves consequences more or less serious and fatal.

Into extremes * of wickedness few are seen to plunge themselves at once: there is usually a progression from small beginnings to the last act of depravity. These beginnings originate from improper indulgence given to our passions at an early period of our age. Let us then briefly examine this source of misconduct, trace the degrees by which the heart proceeds from slight to gross offences; and when we have viewed the enormity to which trivial faults may ultimately lead, let even trivial faults be avoided by us to the utmost of our power.

With a view to our preservation there is implanted in us a disposition to resent injuries: and as the love of life is strong in our nature, this tendency to resentment equally prevails. So long as the influence of this propensity confines itself merely to the repelling of what may be harmful to us, the propensity itself, being directed to the end for which it was intended, has nothing in it blameworthy. But if we suffer ourselves to be irritated on slight occasions, and by causes of provocation rather imaginary than real, then we are culpable in misapplying our passion of anger; and through such misapplication we first inevitably excite uneasiness to ourselves, and then probably create unhappiness to the objects of our displeasure: and long continued habits of indulging resentment without control

have often terminated in a crime of the deepest dye, even in murder itself. If then we are either proud or selfish, or hasty in our disposition, let us begin early to learn, and never cease to practise with vigilance over ourselves, that most necessary, but most difficult art, the art of governing our temper. If this be not acquired and exercised, we shall continually be in danger either of exposing ourselves to ridicule by acting absurdly, or of losing esteem by speaking rudely, or of incurring contempt by offering violence; it may too happen, in a fatal and unguarded moment of intemperate fury, that we may perpetrate a deed, the penalty of which must be publicly and ignominious death.

There are passions, in the restraint of which our chastity is concerned; and not our chastity only, but with it also are connected our health, our abilities, our fortune, our character. The impure sins of darkness have a natural tendency to debilitate the body, to enfeeble the mind, to slacken industry, to banish attention in the prudent management of temporal affairs, and to create indifference for the esteem of society. When appetite hath once gotten dominion over reason, its cravings are insatiable, and will be gratified at the expense of constitution, talents, possessions, name, honour, religion. Be therefore the first and chiefest powers of our reason exerted in resisting temptations which would lead to impurities; and be it the subject of our daily prayer, that God by his grace would enable us to avoid committing those sins, the fruits of which are infamous; and the wages destructive.

[illegible]

~~Hon. Sp. 1-1, 2, 62.~~

† Libidinosi et intemperantes adulescentia efficitur corpus tradit senectuti. Cic., de Sen. 2, p. 10.

§ Labitur interea res, et Vadimonia succent-
arguent officia, atque agrotat fama vaulted by
Lt who had

* Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.

† Non maxime, quae maxime sunt interdum
irae, injuriae.
Faciunt. Ter. Hec. 3. l. 27.

TEB. Her. 3, 1, 27.

If it were possible to realise the visionary plan of making all property equal, there could not happen to human society a greater misfortune than the adopting of such a measure. For if to property, and the objects connected with it, were prescribed a limit which might not be exceeded, that ardour with which in the present state of competition and inequality either professional or commercial arts are pursued, would be extinguished in those who are now industrious; and as for persons already disposed to idleness, if they were exempted from the necessity of working for their subsistence, in want of better employment, (since ~~employment~~ of some kind man will find to amuse himself), they would have recourse to the most vicious practices; whence the grossest corruption of manners and principles would soon become general. Such depravity would create universal confusion, and thence must result the dire calamities of civil discord. On the other hand, let there be holden out encouragement to the increasing of property by fair and honest means, there will then be promoted ingenuity in discovering arts and application in learning them; activity in acquiring wealth, and frugality in expending it; temperance, the effect of frugality; subordination arising from the arrangement of different persons into different classes, and from the distribution and gradation of labour in each class; law that will regulate our dealings one with another; and religion that will enforce the dictates of law by the most solemn sanctions. Such are the blessings derived from the free power of augmenting property. But in vain were this power either given or exercised, if property, when acquired, were not secure: for in that case, all the evils of equalisation would ensue, with the additional grievance that the honest and industrious would be spoiled and plundered by the villainous and dissipated. In wisdom therefore, and with the truest sense of regard for the real interests of every individual in social life, divine and human laws unite in securing property, by deeming it sacred, and by annexing penalties of the severest nature to violations of the commandment which proclaims "Thou

shalt not steal." The principal on which these penalties are inflicted, is not regard to the intrinsic value of the property stolen, but it is consideration of the horrid train of enormities which would be introduced, if thefts were allowed to pass with impunity. To prevent such enormities, the strongest check is laid on that which is the source of many other crimes, the sin of stealing.

Although extremities of punishment and infamy await only deeds notoriously iniquitous, yet to every act of fraudulent design is affixed disgrace, because such act is contrary to justice, because it tends to destroy mutual confidence, and because, if suffered to proceed without public disapprobation, it might subvert that foundation of civilised society, security of property. He therefore that wishes to be esteemed as a man of upright integrity, must not only abhor such acts of injustice as will call for the vengeance of criminal law, but he must detest the little arts of deceiving, the cunning tricks of over-reaching, the subtle contrivances of secret thieving. From deceiving, over-reaching, and thieving begins the career of improbity; and though persons who are guilty of these offences, may not, perhaps, venture quite so far as the utmost transgression of justice, yet it seldom happens but that sooner or later they are detected in some transaction, the baseness of which renders them contemptible.

Whatever may be their situations, yet most persons are affected by loss of character*. Some are injured in their business; some are bereft of peace in their minds; some are even deprived of life by the virulence of calumny. The "bearing of false witness" therefore, when it hurts any one in his employment is indirect robbery: when it causes vexation, it is malicious cruelty: when it shortens existence, it is absolute murder. And indeed, although the crime of vilifying another not unfrequently arises from wanton levity, which thinks it witty to sport with reputation, yet the sin of bearing false witness very often proceeds

* Nam famæ quidem ac fidei damna majora esse, quam quæ aestimari possent.

from direct intention to do injury, and is often committed for the purpose of gratifying either desire, or envy, or revenge: from which source whenever it springs, it hath in one case all the guilt of adultery, in another of stealing, in another of assassination. On no pretence should encouragement be given to evil speaking. He that loves to indulge his petulance or vanity by traducing character, should be shunned* as a man that would disturb society: and he that with base design brings a false accusation against the innocent, deserves that punishment, which, if the guilt were proved, the accused person would have undergone.†

Experience proves, that although the greater part of mankind do not proceed to extremities of sin, yet all are disposed to one or other of those vices, which, if pursued, would lead to such extremities. Now as no man, who addict himself to a favourite vice, can prescribe to himself bounds which he is assured he shall not be tempted to transgress, so it will be prudent in those, who foreknow the wretchedness they should endure if they should be carried on to sins of the highest enormity, to secure their happiness by resisting vices of inferior guilt, the tendency of which is ultimately towards destruction. This will be avoiding the very entrance on a wrong course. But what is the practice of the inconsiderate? The natural propensity they have to vice they increase by intemperance, and stimulate by drunkenness. He that through drunkenness hath lost his reason, is prepared for the committing of every sin, to which either his own prevailing inclination may direct, or the seducing words of debauched companions may entice him. The evils indeed of excess in drinking are so many and so serious, that to caution the unthinking against contracting habits of indulgence in this vice, will be much to our present purpose. And this cannot be done more effectually, than by shewing the progress of the vice itself, and the gradation from inconveniences to

losses, and from losses to miseries, by which it works the ruin of its votaries.

When the fervour of youth is so far abated, that weariness of application either in mind or body cannot be relieved by simple sustenance, recourse to means of support, more nutritive is confessedly innocent. And no reasonable person will deny, that in proper places and on suitable occasions, the rules of strict temperance may be enlarged, and something more than what absolute necessity requires, may be granted to social festivity. Thus far all is well: let us only be moderate, and there is nothing hitherto culpable: in either of these cases, we do but use our liberty to that purpose which reason allows, and which religion does not forbid. But this liberty, like many other powers, when entrusted to the inexperienced and thoughtless, becomes to them an occasion of much mischief, through the misapplication with which it is perverted. Does nature require additional nourishment? That, which prudently applied would have been salutary, by imprudent excess they make injurious to their health. Are seasons of relaxation allowable? The enlivening conversation of festive hilarity is succeeded either by the ridiculous incoherence, or noisy clamour, or humiliating insensibility of drunkenness. Proceeding thus, perhaps for some few years, they at length anticipate the wants of nature, and neglecting at frequent intervals their necessary occupation, they mispend hours and days in drowning their intellect, and in reducing themselves either to the stupidity of idiots, or the phrenzy of madmen. Thus grows the habit. And now for its consequences.

If the person addicted to excessive drinking be designed for a learned profession, the vice he is pursuing will assuredly tend to disqualify him for intellectual attainments. For through the physical operations of repeated drunkenness, the finest mental abilities, whether strong sense, or retentive memory, or quick imagination, will gradually be impaired: and it is too often seen, that many, who when young were admired for their uncommon capacity, have at an early stage of manhood, been lamented by those who loved, and insulted by those who envied them, as men who had

-Longè fuge; dummodo risum
Exoriat sibi, non hic cuiquam parcat amico.
HOR. S. 1. 4. 34.

† By a most equitable sentence "they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." ESTHER, vii. 10

bestowed the brightest talents, had become burthensome to themselves, disgraceful to their society, and contemptible to the world; and this sacrifice of all their nobler faculties they had made to the miserable gratifications of a low vice!

In the line of commerce or agriculture, if he, who by his situation should be the chief director, habituates himself to drunkenness, either his ingenuity in planning becomes gradually dull, or his calculations of loss and gain are irregular; till at length he finds himself sunk into disrepute, and fallen into decayed circumstances. Degraded and distressed, he has then only to lament ~~the~~ past folly with unavailing sorrow, a sorrow that can restore him neither his forfeited credit nor his squandered opulence.

If drunkenness be the vice of one in humble condition, it soon reduces him to want and wretchedness. For as the drunkard hath neither industry to undertake, nor capacity to execute any work assigned him, he is discarded by those who in exchange for his labour would have given him subsistence; and then for his daily food he has no other means of supply than either the precarious earnings of disgraceful beggary, or the more infamous wages of dishonest theft.

Such are some of the inconveniences, losses and miseries by which drunkenness ruins those who are addicted to it, in matters merely of worldly concern. But added to these calamities, are other evils of a momentous nature. That body which God hath given him, endowed with health, strength, and other powers fitted for the purposes of active life, the drunkard, by his intemperance, makes disfigured and decrepit at that period of his age when, had he lived in sobriety, he had been firm and robust. That soul which God hath imparted to him, furnished with innumerable faculties and intended for improvement in spiritual perfection, by his habitual excess he hath either stupified,* or rendered the seat of impurity and depravity.

But after some few years (for the whole term of man's life extends but to few years) he cometh the god of all their actions to the drunkard, to the bearer of false witness, to the stealer, to the adulterer, to him that disobeyeth his parents, to the despiser of religion, and blasphemer against God. To this end should our view be directed. For surely as there is a God and a future state, the issue will not be the same to him that hath rightly employed, and to him that hath misused his talents; to him that hath endeavoured to lead a virtuous life, and to him that hath persisted in a course of wickedness. Even in this state of existence, the fruits of virtue and vice are, generally speaking, different as to mental satisfaction; but however with respect to this or other circumstances our actions may terminate here, yet *this* is not the only state for which man was designed. There will be another state; in which it is both reasonable to conclude, and scriptural to affirm, that those who have done good will be happy, and those who have done evil will be miserable. If this final result of our present conduct were duly remembered, we should have the strongest inducement most cautiously and conscientiously to avoid not only actual sin, but even whatever in its remote consequences may lead to sin.

SERMON CLXI.

By GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D. D.

Warden of St. Mary's College, Winchester.

Causes which make Men dislike Truth.

GAL. IV. 16.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

AMONG other ill effects of inordinate propensity and vicious inclination, there is this most unhappy and prejudicial consequence; at the very time in which we have the greatest need of salutary admonition, we are least disposed either to seek or adopt it. When we have throw-

* See Bishop SHERLOCK, vol. iv. Disc. 10. p. 265. ed. 1764.

off the restraints of reason and religion, and yielded ourselves to the dominion of passion and appetite, our will becomes averse from every thing that has the appearance of contradiction to its desires, and our understanding no longer retains the same solicitude and clearness of distinction in discerning the difference of right and wrong, of good and evil, with which it before discovered the true line of moral rectitude.

Are we too much influenced by the selfish passions?—Whether our excessive attention to private interest betray us into insatiable covetousness or unbounded ambition, the disapprobation of advice will in either case be equally strong. Any suggestions, designing to correct the fraudulent arts or mean practices of covetousness, would be imputed either to an affection of tender conscience, or to a prodigal disregard of pecuniary advantage: and any cautions, tending to retard the progress of immoderate ambition, would be ascribed to rigid austerity and shallow knowledge of the world.

Do the vindictive passions predominate? Anger impels the mind to some act of violence, with a degree of impetuosity that overlooks all intermediate considerations, and forces it with precipitation to exhaust its fury on the object of its resentment. Revenge works with more slow, but more malignant determination: it cherishes the wound that rankles in the bosom; aggravates the causes of suspicion and hatred; broods over dark and insidious thoughts; occupies itself with conceiving means of destruction to the persons offending; and desists not from its horrid purpose, till its desire of retaliating be fully gratified. Thus anger is more hasty, and revenge more sullen than to obey dictates, which would teach self-government; and he that would wish to promote reconciliation, would but incur displeasure, and be deemed impertinent.

Are we deluded by the deceitfulness

of grosser sin? This involves the mind in a degree of darkness, which cannot admit the light of truth. If the fairest paintings have no beauty for the blind, nor the sweetest harmony have charms for the deaf, so neither can moral and religious truths have any persuasive influence on him who has been long accustomed to hear, see, imagine, and practice nothing but what is vicious. His passions are so inflamed by corrupt gratification, that they totally exclude the cooler judgment of reason: his appetites so incessantly demand intemperate indulgence, that they leave him no space for reflection, no opportunity for the exercise of sober thought, no leisure for listening to the voice of conscience: should words of moral and religious concern chance to strike his ear, yet from being long habituated to view all things, not immediately conducive to sensual pleasure, through the false representation of perverted judgment, he will not approve, he cannot understand the simple language of unaffected and dispassionate advice.

There is moreover a hardness of heart, which is gradually increased by repeated acts of grosser sin. In the beginnings of vice, the pangs of conscience will frequently and forcibly agitate the offender: but as in the body the external limbs become less delicate when inured to hardship, so in the soul, the internal senses become less susceptible of remorse, when addicted to continual violation of sobriety and purity. In natural and moral cases, the effect of habit is the same: conscience by degrees will grow obdurate, till at length the offender be given up to a mind so void of feeling,* as to be morally dead in sin.

As such are the effects arising from an undue prevalence of the selfish or vindictive passions, and from the deceitfulness of grosser sin, we may conclude, that from one or other of these causes, it generally proceeds; that although the truth be spoken with the purest intentions, and for the very best and most important services, yet it is frequently either received with indifference, or re-

* Upon examination, you will find that men's reason and judgment fail, in the very same proportion that vice and passion prevail."

† Ep. Socrates D. vol. iv. p. 177. ed. 1764.

* See Eph. iv. 12.

jected with displeasure; and those who deliver it, are hated as enemies, and hence become objects marked out for vengeance. And upon examination of facts recorded in history, we shall actually find that men, wise and exemplary, inspired prophets, holy apostles, and even our divine Lord himself, were treated with insult and afflicted by persecution, because they admonished persons notoriously corrupted and enslaved by one or other of those inordinate propensities and vicious appetites.

It shall now be our employment to confirm this assertion, by selecting some instances from sacred history; on which, whilst we expatiate, perhaps we may not only prove that the covetous, the ambitious, the resentful, the grossly sensual, are enemies to truth, but we may also suggest some remarks which will lead to improvement.

The cities of the plain exhibit man in the most abandoned state of abominable depravity. 'To Lot, who with deep abhorrence condemned their vile practices, the inhabitants exclaimed, "this one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge."* Censure, to minds thus immersed in the foulest sins, could not be heard without extreme indignation. Blindness and destruction ensued from their wickedness, and to this moment their name is stamped with the blackest characters of indelible infamy.

The confinement of Joseph, whence was it occasioned? Like a man of integrity, he refused to insult his master's honour; like a man of piety, he feared to violate the laws of God. "How (says he) can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"† A rebuke thus serious, from one of rank inferior, provoked the tempter to malicious revenge. The consequence of his sanctity was a false charge, which doubtless his accuser hoped would procure his death. Imprisonment is adjudged; and thence began the prosperity of Joseph. Thus, what human iniquity had designed to be a punishment, the goodness of God converted into a blessing; an example this, which enforces and illustrates that most admirable, salutary and comprehensive

precept, "keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last."‡

When he, that was afterwards the leader of the Israelites, began to inquire into the condition of the people, with whom by descent he was connected, he beheld "two men of the Hebrews striving with each other."§ Oppressed as they were, by servitude and cruelty, they should have been prompted, by every consideration of mutual interest and general concern, to have cultivated peace and strengthened attachment amongst themselves. When through violent anger, a disposition to unanimity had been interrupted, it was an act of benevolence to admonish the contending parties of their imprudence, in aggravating by private dissension the miseries already inflicted on them in their state of bondage. Hoping to reconcile the Hebrews that were at variance, Moses said to him that did the wrong, "wherefore smitest thou thy brother?"|| Why dost thou offer violence to one of thy own nation and kindred? He who is the aggressor in any deed of injustice, is commonly less placable than he who suffers: he usually persists in hatred to the person injured, and resents any interposition which would allay his animosity. Such was the conduct of the culpable Hebrew, In return for the kindness designed by his admonisher, he replies, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us; intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"§ He was not content with a retort of scorn and insolence, but ungratefully meant to reproach the friend of his countrymen, for having avenged an insulted Hebrew, at the peril of his own life. So incapable of discerning the good purpose, for which those who regard us give their advice, and so unthankful for the exertions made by them in our behalf, are we rendered by anger.

"Flee to thy place,"|| exclaims Balak to Balaam, smiting his hands with wrath and vexation. And yet what was

* Ps. xxxvii. 38.

† Ex. ii. 13.

‡ Num. xxiv. 11.

† Ex. ii. 13.

§ Ex. ii. 14.

* Gen. xix. 9.

† Gen. xxxix. 9.

the offence, by which Balaam had incurred this displeasure? His inclination was corrupt enough for the executing of any purpose enjoined him: but there was a superior power of conscience and a divine prohibition, which forbade his devoting the Israelites to destruction. Workers of iniquity require instruments prepared for ill, even the most desperate practices: those who are yet influenced by conscience and religion, are not fit servants for men, who, through means the most opposite to moral sense and to reverence for God, would sacrifice all regard for human and divine commands, in order to obtain the object of their wishes. Balaam had in one respect violated his conscience by going to Balak: but he was not so determined to oppose all restraints of duty, as to attempt execrating the Israelites in defiance of God! So far at least he deserves commendation, as he would not proceed to extreme evil for the wages of corruption. But Balak conceived a man who would thus speak the truth, an enemy to his interest; he therefore withholds from Balaam all the honours intended as a reward for unrighteous services, and dismisses him with resentment.

The Levitical law had forbidden the Israelites so to alienate their land, as to sell it past recovery. Ahab wished to purchase the vineyard of Naboth, but the possessor refused to part with the "inheritance of his fathers."* He feared to disobey the ordinance of God, however he might have been recompensed for such transgression. What Ahab could not acquire by purchase, he gained by the most oppressive iniquity. Witnesses were suborned to charge Naboth with blasphemy, and through their perjury, the innocent man was condemned and stoned to death. No obstruction now remained in the way of Ahab; he took possession of the vineyard, since Naboth was no more. Elijah, the prophet, was sent to reprove Ahab; the guilty violator of justice no sooner beheld this pious man advancing, than he exclaimed, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!"† Thus quickly

does conscience take the alarm, confront the perpetrator of an atrocious action, and dread the presence of one who will reprove it. Elijah did but execute the duties of his office in rebuking the impieties of Ahab; but that rebuke was sufficient cause for making him odious to a man wicked and iniquitous as Ahab was.

A continuance of God's favour, and the consequence of it, national prosperity, were promised to the Jews on the express condition that they should obey the divine commands in all respects, but more particularly in rejecting idolatry. Such, however, was their propensity to adopt the superstitions of the people, whom they had conquered, that the temple of God was sometimes polluted by the introduction of idols. Against a sin thus repugnant to their own law, and in itself thus insulting to the majesty of the Supreme Being, the prophets ceased not to warn their countrymen. But what return did they experience for their zeal in the cause of God, and for their anxiety to avert destruction from their cities? "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."* Thus does St. Paul describe the sufferings of those who in succession were raised up to admonish the Jews; and thus does he confirm the solemn confession in which the Levites bewail before God, "our fathers were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets, which testified against them to turn them to thee."†

When the Jews were restored from their captivity in Babylon, they did, indeed, desist from idolatry, but in other instances they continued equally obstinate against advice, and equally ungrateful to those who spake the truth, as their fathers had been. In proof of this, let their conduct towards our Divine Lord be considered.

At the time in which our Saviour

* 1 Kings, xxi. 3.

† 1 Kings, xxi. 90.

* Heb. vi. 37.

† Neh. ix. 16—26.

dwelt on earth, the Pharisees were the leading persons among the Jews. They were characterised by their pretensions to superior strictness in the observing of ritual ordinances. But with all their pretensions, as they were notoriously covetous and spiritually proud; as they perverted the law of God by traditions favourable to their own rapacity and arrogance; as their worship was more ostentatious and affected, than real and sincere; they were neither moral nor religious in the manner required by the law and the prophets. It was indeed incumbent on them to discharge punctually the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic institution; but the same institution demanded of them much more than this outward service. The whole heart purified from vice, and the soul humbly devoted to the love and fear of God, are in their sacred writings continually pointed out as the most acceptable sacrifices which could be offered to the Almighty. But from reformation of morals, and from principles of vital piety, as the Pharisees had deviated themselves, so also they misled the people; teaching them to rest satisfied with external forms, but inculcating nothing of inward goodness. It therefore became him, whose gracious purpose was the redemption of mankind from the practice and guilt of sin, to reprove the vices of those who, by their authority and example, had corrupted moral virtue; and who, whilst they burdened religious worship with numerous observances, had excluded that simple and rational service of a devout mind which should always accompany forms, and without which, all forms are but shew and hypocrisy. But this work of reformation was the chief cause which offended the Pharisees. Christ was a light that shone amidst darkness,* but the darkness comprehended it not;† i. e. did not admit, did not receive it in its full influence. Sin had blinded the eyes of their mind, that they could not discern "the beauty of holiness," nor admire the excellency of gospel precepts: "they loved darkness rather than light, because

their deeds were evil."‡ That their faults should be exposed, their opinions contradicted, their errors corrected, their authority diminished, were occasions of resentment never to be forgiven, till vengeance could be satisfied by the death of him whose life and doctrine repudiated their iniquity. Enraged as they were by the influence of human passions, they had not moral liberty to exercise their minds in judging of our Lord's claim to divine mission from the works he wrought: nor could they be disposed to acknowledge him, whom they hated and persecuted; as the Messiah that was promised by their Scriptures, and whose coming was foreseen and most assuredly believed by Abraham the founder of the Jewish nation. When therefore Jesus tells them that "God was his Father,"† that "they had not the love of God in them,"‡ that "if they believed in Moses, they would have believed in him & also," the Jews "sought to kill him."§ They were meditating how to execute their unjust purpose, when Jesus again asserts his divine origin, ¶ enforces the necessity of believing on him** for the obtaining of salvation, asserts that those only are truly free, who, through faith in him, emancipate themselves from the dominion of corrupt appetites; and assures the Jews, that as they persisted in sin they were the servants of sin, †† however they might conceive themselves free in descent from Abraham their progenitor. These declarations were founded in truth, and on that very account exasperated minds incapable of embracing or loving truth. Our Lord, "who knew what was in man,"‡‡ and who on all occasions "perceived the wickedness"§§ of his persecutors, tells them plainly the ground of their determined malice: "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth."¶¶ "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."** Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"***

* St. John, iii. 19.

† St. John, v. 43.

‡ St. John, v. 18.

** St. John, viii. 24.

†† St. John, ii. 23.

‡‡ St. John, viii. 40.

*** St. John, viii. 46.

† St. John, v. 18.

‡ St. John, x. 46.

§ St. John, viii. 23.

¶ St. John, viii. 34.

§§ St. Matth. xxii. 18.

¶¶ St. John, viii. 45.

* St. John, i. 5

This obstinacy of the Jews, in resisting all the means of grace vouchsafed to them by God through his prophets and divine Son, at length terminated in such a dispersion of their people, as was never known in the records of history; and to this day they are living witnesses attesting the truth of our Lord's predictions, and teaching the world that rejecting the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through vicious principles, depraved habits, and conceited prejudices, can be no trivial offence in the sight of that God, who can will nothing but in the most perfect wisdom, and for the most beneficent end, and who therefore could not have sent into the world his eternal Son as a divine instructor and powerful redeemer, but for purposes most important in themselves, and salutary in their consequences. But as God hath sent so exalted a person, and through him has claimed our attention, if there be any reverence due to the commands of God, it is due to the Gospel containing those commands; and all disregard of the Gospel, when clearly revealed, must appear sinful as being a dishonour to God.

The disciples of our Lord were taught by him to expect, that in the work of their ministry they should experience the most severe affliction. "If," says he, "they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."* "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake,"† "Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death."‡ "Yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service."§ These predictions of our Lord were literally accomplished in the personal sufferings endured by his disciples. St. Peter and St. John being brought before the Jewish council, were condemned first to imprisonment, and then to stripes. || St. James, by the

the command of Herod, was killed with the sword.¶ St. Stephen, by the furious zealots, was cast out of the city and stoned.†† St. Paul thus describes the evils he had sustained.‡‡ Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned. §§ And whence all this came to the Jews? They had given to the Jews no other offence, than that they had faithfully executed the important commission which their Lord had entrusted to them, by endeavouring to convince both Jews and Gentiles that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God; that salvation was to be obtained not by ritual observances, but by repentance for sins past, and faith in Christ; and that it behoved all persons to abandon their former wickedness, and thenceforth discharge conscientiously the several duties incumbent on them, the duties of temperance in themselves, of integrity towards their fellow-creatures, of sanctity towards God; since by his own resurrection Christ had demonstrated, that from their graves he would raise up all that are dead, and that then shall follow a retribution of happiness or misery, dispensed to every one according to the good or bad use which he may have made of the moral powers, spiritual advantages, and heavenly graces bestowed on him by God in this life. These were truths, not acceptable to the Jews; nay more, not acceptable to many through the world § at large either in former or present days. Those who love the worst part, that is, the sins of the world, its irregular affections, its vicious habits, its sensual pleasures, its inordinate desires, its corrupt practices, its gross iniquities, are not much disposed to admire or adopt the precepts either of moral virtue or Christian religion. We have seen in sacred history, we see it daily before our eyes, that in proportion as the heart is inclined to vice, it becomes less desirous of knowing, and less fit for admitting the

* Acts, xii. 2.

† 2 Cor. xi. 24.

† Acts, vii. 58, 9.

Ob hanc rem,

Quod sunt, quod genus hoc minime juvat, ut-

pute plures

Culpati dignos.

Hon. S. 1. 4. 23.

* St. John, xv. 20.

† St. Luke, xxi. 10.

|| Acts, c. iv. & v.

† St. Luke, xxi. 12.

§ St. John, xvi. 2.

dictates of reason, and the doctrines of revelation. But no one in his sober senses and sound intellect can pretend to justify the following of his vicious propensities and excluding of serious thought; the very attempt to defend such proceeding would be contradictory to the higher faculties with which he is endowed by heaven. Conscience and reason bid us resist evil tendencies, and urge us to regard the admonitions of those whom experience has enabled, and situation authorised, to speak the truth and give wholesome counsel. If in these their suggestions, conscience, and reason direct us properly, as unquestionably they do, then all insinuations that would confirm the mind in habits of excess, and entirely divert it from seasonable reflection, are to be considered as illusive fallacies repugnant to right thinking, and founded on the misrepresentation of passions and appetites not duly controlled. But if loose indulgence of passions and appetites be the chief obstacle which impedes the force of reason and conscience, then, as moral agents and rational beings, we are bound to keep our passions and appetites in their just balance, and under proper restraint. When we have effected this arduous task, we shall have conscience and reason assisting our minds, and making them open to the conviction* of truth; truth itself we shall no longer dislike; we shall neither lay aside with neglect the word of exhortation written in past ages; nor shall we turn away with aversion from the advice of those, who in the line of their duty, in becoming terms, and on suitable occasions, deliver candidly and impartially what the nature of the case may require either in moral or religious concerns. No one is so wise as never to need counsel: nor so constantly attentive to what is strictly right, as never to require that he should be reminded of it. The most prudent are subject to indiscretions; the most regular fall into inadvertencies. But from such frailties we are soon recovered if the heart be incorrupt: our hearts

therefore, let us guard with all diligence, supplicating the Almighty, that "by his holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding may perform the same."

SERMON CLXII.

BY GEO. ISAAC HUTCHINGS, D.D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

False Philosophy considered.

COL. II. 8.

Beware lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy.

ON men of ingenuous, but inexperienced minds, there is nothing so imposing as a specious name. To such persons, under the disguise of an assumed appellation, vices recommend themselves with so much success, as to deceive the unwary into a confident opinion* that their conduct is proper, although to judicious observers it appears palpably wrong. And this delusion continues to beguile them, till some unhappy consequence begins to create in them suspicions of error, and at length convinces them that they have been too long mistaken. In private life; some are brought into great distress, from having acted under an idea that inattention to pecuniary concerns was a mark of generosity. Others fall into vicious practices, because easy compliance with every proposal of a companion appears to them a proof of good temper. Others commit irregularities, through a persuasion that to despise the uniformity of rules is an indication of high spirit. Others violate the decencies of politeness, conceiving disregard to forms a sign of superior ability. Then again in public life; many do in reality serve the cause of licentiousness, whilst with the purest intentions they mean only to extend liberty: and many give en-

* "Innocence is the only true preserver of reason and judgment."

Bp. SHARLOCK, v. iv. D. vi. p. 184.

*Cum sint vicina virtutibus vitia, etiam qui vitiis utuntur, virtutis tamen his nomen impo-
nunt. QUINTIL. l. viii. c. iii. s. 1. This remark
is equally true in a moral, as in a critical
sense.

couragement to indifference for all religion, whilst they imagine themselves to be promoting only liberality of sentiment. Now in the one case, admirable are generosity, good temper, high spirit, and superior ability; but surely no man in his right senses can say it is admirable, either to bring on himself indigence through imprudent neglect of his property; or to become depraved through weakness in yielding to solicitations; or to injure society by bad example; or to insult established usages of behaviour by an affected impertinence. So in the other case, liberty is precious as life itself; and liberality in thinking and judging is part of Christian charity, than which nothing is more lovely: but surely no man of mature judgment can wish genuine liberty to be converted into a cloak for every species of enormity; nor liberality of sentiment be made the occasion of propagating direct atheism. Yet in these points of view are to be seen many measures, which upright but misguided men frequently pursue, merely because they do not fully apprehend the tendencies of their actions.

Persons, therefore, who want experience, should be extremely cautious how they depart from those principles, which have been received generally, because founded on solid reason; and how they deviate from those customs which have obtained long, because in their effect they have proved good. Thus circumspect should all persons be, who cannot yet have acquired much practical knowledge of the world; lest instead of becoming, what they anxiously wish to become, more beneficial to mankind than those who have preceded them, they should actually, though inadvertently, be instrumental towards occasioning some of the worst evils that can befall human society.

The present generation hath been injured by nothing, so much as by the imposing name of philosophy. Philosophy, when it is employed in promoting good morals, in cultivating liberal arts, in strengthening social union, in contemplating the works of creation, and thus leading man to acknowledge and adore the Supreme Being, is a noble science: it is noble because true; and true, be-

cause consistent and corresponding with the nature of man, and with the relations he bears to his fellow-creatures and to his Maker! But that which assumes the name of philosophy, and under this mask debauches morals, dissuades from mental improvement, disunites society, discerns not the wisdom of God either in the earth or the heavens, and discourages men from paying the tribute of gratitude to their universal Father; such a system of doctrines is detestable, because false; and false, because contrary to the nature of man, and his several relations to society and God. Real philosophy we should cherish and love: it is the friend of man, being the source of wisdom, the origin of many comforts, and the handmaid of religion. That, which comes under its borrowed name; which puts on a semblance of what in fact it is not; and which if we are compelled to call philosophy, we must, if we would speak properly, term false philosophy; that is the evil against which we are to guard: and that the credulous and innocent may not be betrayed by the deceptions, the forgeries, and enchantments of this visored impostor*, let us now enumerate some leading points in which this philosophy is false.

1. It is false, in asserting that man in society retains all his natural rights. In exchange for the more certain subsistence, the more secure protection, the greater degree of assistance in times of sickness, or need, or casualty; in exchange for the delights of friendly intercourse, and the improvements of civilization; in exchange for these blessings which man enjoys in society; he relinquishes the savage liberty of roaming at large for prey, of exercising horrid vengeance on the person who has offended him, and of following without controul his ferocious and brutal passions, to the annoyance, disgrace, and destruction of his species.

2. It is false, in maintaining that all men are equal. In every point of view

* Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, soul deceive;
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood, and base forgery?
MILTON'S COMUS, 696.

there is among men remarkable and unavoidable inequality. For neither have all men the same stature, nor the same agility, nor the same strength, nor the same sagacity; which are qualities chiefly valued by the barbarian; nor have all the same genius, nor the same industry, nor the same prudence; which are endowments excellent in civil society. From the disparity with which these bodily and mental faculties are distributed, through the natural operation of cause and effect men necessarily fall into inequality of condition, independently of all political distinctions. If moreover we consider man as intended for civil society, by such constitution of his nature he is designed for a state of inequality. For the very existence of society to any great extent, depends on order. But order requires that some should direct, and others be directed; which implies the subordination of inferiors to superiors.

3. It is false, in its presumptive and arrogant opinion that man is perfect. Whence originate the various enormities that disgrace human nature, and whence the necessity for establishing any laws to restrain vicious propensities, if man be perfect? The history of every society which has been known to institute such laws, is in direct contradiction to all ideas of human perfection, and too evidently demonstrates that man is imperfect. For all laws would be unnecessary if men were perfect; the necessity for them arises from our imperfection. Will it be said, that laws are the source of human depravity? That *some* laws may tend to corrupt man, will readily be allowed: but that *all* laws have such an effect, must positively be denied. The laws, for instance, which forbid me to murder, or steal, or commit adultery, or bear false witness, can never lead me to immorality. To affirm then, that because *some* laws may have a bad influence on morals, therefore *all* laws do thus operate, is to affirm what is false in fact; and it is moreover to argue from a *particular* instance to a *general* conclusion; which is false in reasoning.

Besides, to assert that laws, abstractedly and universally considered, are the source of human depravity, is to call

that the cause, which in reality is but the effect; it is to speak as though laws had made men, and not men laws. Whereas the contrary is the truth; and if men have made laws against murder, theft, adultery, and other vices, they were compelled to make these provisions, by the experience they derived from observation of the human character, and by conviction that their fellow-creatures had actually committed such crimes.

4. It is false, in expecting that any human institution can be perfect. Can the body be sound, the limbs of which are unsound? or the waters sweet, the fountains of which are bitter? So neither can institutions framed by imperfect men be in all parts perfect. Every work of man must more or less bear signs of that imperfection, which is inseparable from the nature of its author.

5. It is false, in proposing to endanger an entire system, upon the *whole* beneficial, for the sake of improving a part, objectionable perhaps, but not injurious. Granting there may, and will be imperfections in all human institutions, yet where the good preponderates, the evil is not so to be regarded, as that the former shall be hazarded for the *chance* of removing the latter. In the body natural, to hurt the vitals in order to heal the extremities, would be an act either of ignorance or of desperation. If in society there exist usages of acknowledged defect when considered abstractedly, but which from being counterbalanced by other circumstances are not prejudicial, and which cannot be changed without very material detriment to society itself; then to sacrifice the welfare of the community at large to considerations of partial advantage, would be repugnant to every principle of common prudence.

6. It is false, in conceiving that because the use of any thing is good, therefore the abuse of it must be also good. Freedom of action is good; but if that freedom be extended to subversion of all laws, in its excess it is not good. Freedom of speech is also good; but if it be carried beyond the bounds of decency, to slander and blasphemy, in its injurious and impious perversion it is not good.

7. It is false, in supposing that the

operation of the same principle should always proceed in the same direction. That man should enjoy civil and religious liberty is a virtuous principle, which should actuate the mind of every honest and religious person: and the maintenance of this principle will never support either despotism or persecution, because both are inconsistent with it. But neither, on the other hand, will he approve of endeavours, which under the sanction of civil liberty would contend for exemption from lawful authority; or which under the pretence of religious liberty would introduce atheism. For, in his conception, civil liberty is somewhat very different from the rejecting of all legal restraint whatever; and religious liberty somewhat very different from atheism, which has nothing to do with religion. Consistency with his principle, would require him to dissent, not only on the one hand from measures that were arbitrary, but also on the other from such as were licentious; both being equally dangerous to real liberty. His principle would continue the same; and the application of it would be with the same views; but the direction would vary as the case varies. The expert mariner throws his ballast on that side of the vessel, which wants its due proportion of burthen. The mechanic applies the weight to that side of the scale, where the equipoise is failing. The judicious commander supports that part of the army, which appears the weakest. The object of each, in his respective way, will be the same, and they will all act on the common principle of doing their best, as the nature of the case may happen to demand.

8. It is false, in denying the difference of things. By what means man obtains a general sense of right and wrong; whether from the constitution of his nature, as some conceive, or from education, as others maintain, it is needless to dispute: the fact is, that in civil society every one has that general sense.*

* Who can doubt, whether mankind have been universally persuaded that there is a right and a wrong in human conduct? Some things, which in certain circumstances they ought to

And even the very persons, who are most busy in confounding good and evil, do nevertheless shew, when their interest is concerned, that they clearly discriminate the one from the other. For, the most dishonest will rather trust their persons and property to a man of known integrity, than to one of suspicious character: the reason is, they rely on the virtue of the former, but mistrust the fidelity of the latter. And this persuasion of placing confidence in the just, but of withholding it from the unjust, operates universally throughout mankind, and plainly proves that in the common concerns of life, the difference of right and wrong not only may be distinguished, but actually is discerned, and applied as a direction for proper conduct in the prudent management of temporal affairs.

This power of discriminating between right and wrong, between good and evil, may however be proved by an instance of a kind more generous, than that of regard to self-interest. Whence is it, that on reviewing the lives of men who for ages past have ceased to exist, as their history proceeds, our minds imperceptibly annex to their actions either approbation or censure unpremeditated and spontaneous†? We admire the just and humane, like Titus: we abhor the oppressive and cruel, like Domitian. The unerring judgment we thus pass is the effect of a distinguishing principle in man's nature; a principle which, however dormant or perverted it may be in a savage people, hath nevertheless been always prompt in perceiving and right in deciding, amongst men living in that state, where alone the human faculties and qualities can be seen in perfection, the state of civilization.

But if we have within us a principle thus capable of discriminating between

do, and other things which they ought not to do? The universality of these opinions, and of many others that might be named, is sufficiently evident, from the whole tenour of men's conduct, as far as our acquaintance reaches; and from the records of history, in all ages and nations, that are transmitted to us.

Dr. RUSK on the Intellectual Powers of Man, Essay I. c. ii. p. 46, ed. 1785.

† See "Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil," by Hutcheson. Treatise II. s. 1, 2.

good and evil, and if that principle doth so discriminate, then that there should be some things good and some evil, and that there should be a difference between them, is a necessary consequence.

Another argument to the same purpose arises from considering that indignation*, which persons who in general perhaps are not very solicitous respecting their character, do nevertheless shew when charged with crimes of which they are innocent. And this anger is not the consequence of cool reflection; and therefore cannot be said to be the effect of fear lest punishment should ensue: it is the instantaneous and involuntary impulse of the mind, which is exasperated at the idea of having been thought guilty in a base act, and resents the injustice of a suspicion not merited. Here indeed is a double proof of power to discern right and wrong: for the person thus accused, by his being irritated at a false charge, immediately discovers that he distinguishes moral evil from moral good; and by his feeling pain under an accusation not deserved, he manifests how perfectly he understands whether he is treated justly or unjustly by others.

There is then a difference in things; and commonly speaking, it is clear to the apprehension of all men.

9. It is false, in teaching to do evil that good may come of it; or in other words, that the end sanctifies the means. In this country it will scarcely be denied,

that every one who lives in society has a claim on that society for justice and protection. But if it be an allowed maxim, that men may do evil† for the production of some good, then it will not be improbable (because the case has happened) that some persons under the delusion of this principle may, with a view to some imaginary good, not only refuse you justice, but proceed to treat you with the grossest injustice; may first plunder your property, and then deprive you of life, though on your part no offence hath been committed against either law or equity. Where then would be that security of rights, which from society you are encouraged to expect, and warranted in demanding?

Again; the basis of civil society is mutual confidence. But what man of common prudence will commit either his property or his person to the care of another, who holds himself at liberty to betray his trust and even destroy his friend, provided he doth but intend to appropriate the spoils to some good purpose?

Thus then this principle goes to the dissolution of all society; and if so, must be rejected as not compatible or reconcilable with that state, for which man is intended, and in which, when duly constituted, he finds the greater portion of happiness.

But in vindication of this perverse paradox, the public good of society has been pretended. It would however be difficult, nay even impossible to shew, that it can be for the public good of society to defeat the very cause, and counteract the very ends for which all society is instituted; both which evils this paradox completely works, by banishing confidence, and by violating at pleasure, the rights of the society existing.

But its advocate then pleads the good of posterity. Whose posterity? By the sudden death of those, whom this maxim may have taken off, he has done his

* An illustration of this remark occurs in vol. ii. b. 1. c. 10. "Voyages to the South Sea," published by Hawkesworth in 1773.—Tubourai Tamaike, an Otahitean, had been falsely suspected of stealing a knife, which in reality had been taken care of by Mr. Banks's servant. When the innocence of the Otahitean appeared, he expressed the emotions of his mind in his looks and gestures, and "with a countenance that severely reproached Mr. Banks with his suspicions."

On this incident it is observed, "These people have a knowledge of right and wrong from the voice dictates of natural conscience; and involuntarily condemn themselves, when they do that to others, which they would condemn others for doing to them. That Tubourai Tamaike felt the force of moral obligation, is certain; for the imputation of an action which he considered as indifferent, would not, when it appeared to be groundless, have moved him with such excess of passion."

† A right to do wrong, or to commit injustice, is an abuse of language, and a contradiction in terms.

Dr. FRACUSON on Civil Society, P. 1. c. 10. p. 106. ed. 1773.

utmost that they shall have no posterity: and by holding out an example to his own posterity, that they may do evil to produce good, he has taught them to rob and destroy each other, as he has robbed and destroyed the men of his own generation. For, what was once in itself lawful, must always be lawful: if robbery and assassination be lawful to the maintainer of this principle, they will be lawful to his children. And thus by precedent he establishes a maxim which, pursued to its consequences, would tend to the utter extinction of all society.

Seen then in these points of view, the paradox of doing evil that good may come of it, is of all others the most mischievous* that ever entered the mind of man.

Sophistry may puzzle plain sense; and violence may compel the oppressed to submit: but in common apprehension, honesty and fact, this is the truth; that if men choose to continue members of society, they are bound to acquiesce in those first principles, on which alone society can be so formed as to answer the ends of its institution. These principles are; 1st. That no man is allowed knowingly and wilfully to do wrong unto another; 2d. That every thing is wrong which is unjust; 3d. That every thing is unjust, which will produce more harm than benefit to the person affected. Where such principles are established, we have grounds of confidence on which we may securely rest; but should the other maxim prevail, on whom or on what could we depend?

10. It is false, in asserting that men are not required to be just in public life, as they are in private.

Society cannot exist to any useful purpose without mutual confidence, nor mutual confidence without the uniform prevalence of truth and justice. Therefore, though in intercourse with the world there may arise many cases, in which it may be difficult to ascertain precisely on

which side truth and justice should lead us to determine, yet from ~~intercourse~~ ^{endeavouring} to follow the spirit of these principles, no man is in any case exempt; and for this reason, viz. because no man, living in society, can in any case be exempt from discharging a social duty to which he is competent; and a social duty it is, incumbent on every person alike, whether he be retired, or whether he concern himself with public affairs, to do his utmost for the conservation of society; which end can be attained *only* by adhering to truth and justice, since they are the foundations of confidence, that basis of civil union.

The same reasoning, which applies to the individual in society, applies also to the society itself with respect to alliance. Where there is no confidence between one nation and another, there can be no alliance; and where truth and justice are wantonly violated, there can be no confidence. Therefore nations, if they wish and profess to make alliance, and of course political administrators of such nations, are bound to observe such conduct towards their allies, as to the party with whom they have contracted alliance, may be serviceable to the ends for which the alliance was contracted, and may be perfectly consistent with equity and good faith†. National safety, national duty, and national character, require this conduct.

11. It is false, in conceiving that experiments may be made in morals, as in physics.

Natural and moral philosophy work not on the same subjects: the one is employed on matter; the other on mind. The effects of experiment on matter may be infinite as the particles of matter, and therefore incalculable. but the effects of experiment in moral principles applied to the human mind are comparatively few, and therefore can be ascertained. Such effects are few, because human nature

* "No end can justify the sacrifice of a principle, nor was a crime ever necessary in the course of human affairs." Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo. vol. ii. p. 307. ed. 1795.

† The learned reader will recollect the upright conduct of Aristides, when it was proposed by Themistocles to burn the fleet of the allied Greeks.

See PLUTARCH, Themistocles, p. 263. vol. i. Bryan's edition.

is universally constituted of the same passions: and those effects can easily be ascertained, because every kind of principle, both consistent and inconsistent with man's nature, hath been already and long since tried, and the consequences are recorded. And it is impossible now to conceive any moral principle, the effect of which might not be foreseen; because, nothing new in morals can be devised; and as for the operation of principles *already known* (which indeed are all that can be discovered) it has always been found that men influenced by similar principles and placed in similar situations act nearly in the same manner; and that certain moral causes will produce certain corresponding moral effects. The attempt therefore to introduce new moral principles in a highly polished and civilized people, is extravagant and wild, because vain and fruitless.

But the extravagance and wildness of the attempt are among the slightest causes that render it objectionable. If the business terminated only in folly, there were in it little danger to be apprehended. It leads however to most fatal consequences: for, it encourages men to act in contradiction to those relations, which they bear to society. Does it not, for instance, contradict such relations to assert, that every one has a right to all he can obtain by strength or power, in contempt of law? Yet this doctrine has been more than once propagated, and (what is still worse) has been made a principle of action the force of which has been carried into immediate effect.

12. It is false, in teaching men to

obey the impulse of passion; rather than the dictates of reason. It is clearly man's duty to follow, by virtuous means, that which shall ultimately terminate in the greatest natural and moral good. The two springs of human action are reason and passion. Now any one passion unrestrained by reason, will in the end produce injury. Thus, hope may lead to credulity, which in matters of business may occasion ruin: fear may unnerve a man against impending danger: anger may precipitate him into madness: desire may plunge him into sensual vices. Reason is the faculty by which these and all passions are restrained from running into excess. But if so, it is the power which ought to direct man's conduct, because it will prevent him from incurring those evils into which the passions might plunge him: and because reason itself can lead to no evils, so long as it retains its essential nature, that of judging rightly. If once we begin to judge not rightly, we are then proceeding, not according to the dictates of reason, but the delusions of error.

13. It is false, in asserting that man is merely material. Man thinks: matter does not * think. Man has self-will and self-motion: matter has neither. Man therefore must be constituted of something very different and distinct from matter, and that is what we call mind. Should it in reply be said, God may, if he chooses, make matter capable of thinking, of willing, and of moving; the answer is, first, that to overlook what God *has* done, and argue from what he *may* do, is to reject † experi-

* See Dr. Ferguson on Civil Society, p. 1. s. i.

We have every reason to believe, that in the case of such an experiment made, we shall suppose, with a colony of children transplanted from the nursery, and left to form a society apart, untaught, and undisciplined, we should only have the same things repeated, which, in so many different parts of the earth, have been transacted already. P. 6. ed. 1773.

† See also Dr. Reid on the Intellectual Powers, &c. Ess. 1. c. iv. p. 53. The constitution of human nature is so similar in different societies or commonwealths, that the causes of peace and war, of tranquillity and sedition, of riches and poverty, of improvement and degeneracy, are much the same in all.

* There is indeed nothing more ridiculous than to imagine, that any motion or modification of matter should produce thought.

Dr. Reid's Intellectual Powers, Ess. 2. c. iv. p. 95.

† Certè contra experimentorum ténorem somnia temerè confingenda non sunt, nec a naturæ analogiâ recedendum est, cum ea simplex esse soleat, et sibi semper consona.

Newtoni Principia, l. 3. R. 3.

Quicquid ex phænomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est; et hypotheses seu metaphysicæ, seu physicæ, seu qualitatum occultarum, sed mechanicæ, in philosophiâ experimentali locum non habent.

Ibid. l. 3. Schol. Generalis.

ence for speculation, and substitute theory for facts, which is a vicious mode of reasoning: and in the next place, it is to introduce confusion of terms; for if matter were made capable of thinking, willing, and moving, it would be no longer matter, it would be something very different from it, because it would have properties which no combination or division of matter was ever known * to produce. If the essential properties of any thing be altered, it becomes in its nature new; and so the case would be with respect to matter.

14. It is false, in supposing that nothing is to be admitted as true, which is not capable of inmathematical demonstration. It is contrary to the condition of man to require mathematical demonstration in all cases, † before we assent to the truth of them. For, the concerns of life could not be carried on if we did not rely on the word ‡ of each other for facts done at present: and we must remain in total ignorance of circumstances past, if we did not admit the evidence of historical testimony. But neither the assertions of men living, nor the evidence of historical testimony, amount to inmathematical demonstration, although, when the persons speaking or writing cannot reasonably be suspected of falsehood, their statements do amount to moral certainty. With reliance, however, on this certainty, though short of demonstration, we daily act, and on every principle of reason are justified §

* He (Dr. Hartley) even acknowledges that matter and motion, however subtly divided or reasoned upon, yield nothing more than matter and motion still.

Dr. REID'S Intellect. Powers.
Ess. 2. c. iii. p. 90.

† It is a common observation, that it is unreasonable to require demonstration for things which do not admit of it.

Dr. REID'S Intellect. Powers,
Ess. 7. c. iii. p. 690.

‡ See Bishop SHERLOCK'S Dis. II. vol. iv. p. 289. ed. 1764.

§ Things of several kinds may admit and require several sorts of proofs, all which may be good in their kind.

When a thing is capable of good proof in any kind, men ought to rest satisfied in the best evidence for it, which that kind of things will

both in thus acting, and in believing facts, which happened in ages antecedent to that in which we now exist.

15. It is false, in opposing speculative objections to positive facts.

In natural religion, it is a fact that God hath given us life, and various means of enjoying life. This is a proof of God's goodness. It is a fact also, that he hath made the sun, moon, stars, earth, and waters, and fitted them for many useful purposes. These prove the wisdom * and the power of God. All objections then which can possibly be raised, taken from imperfections, imaginary or real, in the works of creation, can never disprove that God is benevolent, wise, and powerful. The utmost avail of such objections can only be a supposition that he might have been more † benevolent, and have shewn greater marks of wisdom and power. But, who can undertake to demonstrate such a presumptuous supposition, when he cannot know thoroughly even this our own system, which is but one part of the universe? On the other hand, reason can produce many arguments, which should convince us *all is for the best*, ‡

bear, and beyond which better could not be expected, supposing it were true.

† It is sufficient that matters of faith and religion be propounded in such a way, as to render them highly credible, so as an honest and teachable man may willingly and safely assent to them, and according to the rules of prudence be justified in so doing.

Bp. WILKINS'S "Principles of Natural Religion."—B. i. c. iii. s. 2, 3. 5.

See *ibid.* B. ii. c. ix. p. 408. edit. 1675.

* *Elegantissima hæcæ solis, planetarum et cometarum compages non nisi consilio et dominio entis intelligentis et potentis oriri potuit.*
NEWTONI Principia, I. iii. Generale Scholium.

† The objection only shews, if it shew any thing, that we can conceive a constitution of things, in which greater benevolence would have appeared: a conclusion with which we have at present no concern.

The arguments by which we prove the Divine benevolence to a certain degree, are not overturned, by objecting, that a greater degree is conceivable. I am now arguing on the very unreasonable supposition, that human conception is the measure of Divine power.

See Dr. BALGUY on Divine Benevolence,
p. 32 and 73.

‡ *Cujus quidem administratio nihil habet in se quod reprehendi possit: ex his enim naturalis*

according to the *present* constitution of the world, and the *present* state of existence.

Again: In revealed religion, that Christ rose from the dead, is a fact attested more strongly than any other fact recorded in ancient history. All objections, then, which can possibly be made against his doctrines, can never disprove this fact; and on this it is we rest our faith.

16. It is false, in dissembling the difficulties which attend infidelity.

In natural religion, it is much more difficult to believe, that the world, formed as it is with design and governed with regularity, should be made and preserved by *chance*, *i. e.* by *nothing*, than it is to believe that it was made and governed by an intelligent Being, competent to the effecting of so stupendous a work.

In revealed religion, it is much more difficult to believe, that Christianity arose from *no certain* ground, than it is to believe that Christ really and actually existed. Nor to what adequate cause but such existence can it be ascribed, that his life is recorded by four histories, for the country and era of which we have strong presumptive proof from their style* and correspondence with the circumstances of their time; and for the writers of which, we have testimonies † from the age immediately subsequent to them: to what other cause can it be ascribed that his doctrines should be the subject of many epistles, which by striking coincidences † of time and place, and minute particulars, bear singular cha-

acters of authenticity; and that passages should be cited from those histories and epistles, and allusions made to them by many authors, who are known to have written at the distance of at least sixteen hundred years from the present date: to what other cause can it be ascribed, that in a vast empire idolatry should have yielded to the establishment of his religion; that many nations have made his principles the basis of their legislation; that for seventeen centuries there has been a succession of men professing themselves his disciples, and that at this day, in several countries, civilized and enlightened, is observed a solemn ceremony, in commemoration of his death: to what other cause *can* all these effects be ascribed, but to the sole cause which is adequate to account for them, *viz.* the real and actual existence of Christ? Surely it is beyond comparison more difficult to believe that those notorious and extraordinary facts should rest on no other foundation but fiction, than it is to believe that Christ lived, died, and rose again, in the manner related of him by the evangelists and apostles.

17. It is false, in confounding remote consequences with primary qualities. Thus, the religious wars which have been carried on by Christians, it charges on Christianity. Now it is incontrovertible, that the language of Christianity, as found in the Gospels, speaks nothing but peace; and that the spirit of Christianity is so benevolent as to forbid all unjust aggression, and to allow resistance and repulsion of injury so far only as in self-protection may be prudent and necessary. If then the professors of Christianity have used violence where no danger threatened them, or have propagated their principles of faith by means of cruelty and persecution, the criminality of such proceedings must be imputed, not to Christianity itself, but to the professors of it; who were influenced either by mistaken judgment, or misguided zeal, or ambition, or pride, or avarice, or some other malignant passion, which imposed itself on them under the name and appearance of conscience. To charge on Christianity, which in itself is good, either the errors or the vices

quæ erant, quod effeci optimum potuit, effectum est. Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 34. quoted by Dr. BALGUY, p. 74. "Divine Benevolence."

See also THOMPSON'S SUMMER, v. 318.

Let no presuming impious railer tax CREATIVE WISDOM, as if ought was form'd In vain, or not for admirable ends.

Shall little haughty ignorance pronounce His works unwise, of which the smallest part Exceeds the narrow vision of her mind?

* See MICHAELIS'S Introduction to the Four Gospels, translated by MARSH, sect. 10, 11. 7. B. in chapter 1.

† See Archdeacon PALLEY'S "HOMES PAULINE;"

of the persons who do indeed embrace, but who also pervert or disobey it, is so palpable an instance of arguing from *abuse*, as no just reasoning can possibly admit. And equally unfair is it to blame Christianity for the consequences that ensue from the corruption of its doctrines and the neglect of its positive precepts, as it were to blame jurisprudence, because many have been ruined by legal chicanery; or medicine, because the deaths of many have been hastened by empiricism; or literature, because men who have turned their abilities to the vilest of purposes, have written against every thing that is praise-worthy and sacred before God and man; or commerce, because the supplies which it administers to our wants are employed to pamper the appetite of luxury, and to swell the riot of excess. If either Christianity, or jurisprudence, or medicine, or literature, or commerce, has been made a pretended ground for the introduction of evil, such pretence has been in open contradiction to what was first intended in the cultivation of them; and the mischief is chargeable, not on them, which in themselves are good, and which in their original tendencies lead to good; but either on the folly or the wickedness of men, who have perverted the nature of these blessings, and have directed them to improper ends.* Surely the clearness of the fountain is not affected, because its stream at a remote distance is discoloured by the soil over which it flows: nor is the light of the sun *therefore* not bright, because on earth we may behold it through some dark body interposed between our eye and the source of effulgence.

But farther; it is disingenuous in suppressing this fact, viz. that for the thousands who may have suffered in wars termed holy, millions have lived in more undisturbed enjoyment of their property, in safer protection of their persons, in stricter purity of morals, in more uniform practice of private and domestic virtues, of social and public duties, under the benign and vital influence of Chris-

tianity, than under any other system of religion, or avowal of irreligion, that can be named. In no country not Christian, are there so many instances of good effects resulting from any other cause whatever, as are found to arise in nations that are Christian, from the impressions made directly and indirectly by Christianity, operating as it does on our laws, our sentiments, our manners, and our habits. Say then, shall we relinquish the religion of the Gospel, and instead of it adopt either the loose indifference of scepticism, or the pitiable uncertainties of deism, or the unbounded sensuality of Mahometanism, or the degrading idolatries of those who worship Brama, or Foi; or shall we rush precipitately into that atheism which at once throws off all restraint on the passions, disregards all maxims of equity, dissolves all the ties of social connexion, steels the heart against the fine feelings of humanity, sheds human blood without a pang of remorse, and makes man to man a creature more savage than any beast of the forest is to one of its own species? But these are the persuasions on religious subjects which prevail in the nations most important on the face of the earth: say then, shall we in exchange for any one of these, or for any of the cruel and absurd rites in the islands of the Southern * Ocean, resign the rational, sober, mild, and merciful doctrines of Evangelical Christianity? That so dire infatuation may never possess our minds, let us earnestly endeavour, as we value the dignity and happiness of human nature.

18. It is false, in excluding Divine Providence from the government † of the world.

It is the first property of matter to be inactive. The planets are material, but do nevertheless perform their periodical revolutions. There must then have been

* See Chap. ix. b. iii. vol. 2. of "A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean," by CAPTAIN COOK, in 1776, 1777, &c.

† Deus enim sine dominio, providentia, et causis finalibus, nihil aliud est quam fatum et natura.

NEWTON: Principia, l. 3. Scholium Gener.

* See Dr. RYAN'S "History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind," vol. ii. s. 7.

originally some power, independent * of the planets themselves, which communicated to them their primary motion; and that power is the effect of Divine Providence.

Again; man hath no power to command that the earth shall produce, and the seasons mature, the various fruits on which he subsists. But there is a power independent of man, independent of the earth and seasons, which, through means of the earth and seasons, doth furnish him with abundance of all supplies that either necessity may crave or luxury desire. The exercise of that power is a manifestation of providence in him by whom it is exercised.

The life of man depends so much on the perfect state of many minute parts in the human frame, that it might be shortened by obstructions in several vesicles. These obstructions and other injuries it is not in the power of man to avert; but there is a power independent of man, which doth avert them. This then is a demonstration of a particular providence over each individual.

Again; though in the common affairs of the world there is such a degree of correspondence † between the means and the end, as to justify and encourage us in adopting certain measures for the accomplishing of certain purposes, yet on various occasions we find effects in no way answering to visible causes. The wisdom of man is baffled; his counsels are frustrated; his efforts prove abortive: and yet, so far as human prudence could judge, the designs were calculated for ensuring success in the enterprize under-

taken. But there is a power, that overrules all human endeavours; that often produces a consequence diametrically opposite to what was expected; that is particularly discernible in its benign operations to * educe good from what seemed to threaten evil: all which exertions of power are farther demonstrations of providence applied by some being; who is far above all that man can behold or comprehend.

Of a superintending providence these are evidences direct, which no subtleties of dispute can possibly overthrow, so far as the facts themselves extend. Instances of cases that may *appear* to contradict, could not invalidate facts which *positively* prove the exercise of providence. The utmost which such instances could do, would be to furnish a *specious* argument for *supposing* only that the operations of providence might be *more* wide: they never could shew its operations to be altogether non-existent, so far as facts prove them actually to exist. But is man then so acquainted with the *whole* system of divine administration, that he cannot possibly labour under any *misconceptions*, when he passes censure on *parts* of it? Can he undertake to demonstrate that what in *one* respect may have the *appearance* of casualty, *cannot* possibly in *many other* respects have all the marks of final design? Yet, until man can prove that any arrangement in the dispensations of God to this world, is either in itself nugatory, or in all its relations inadequate and improper for the purpose it is to serve, he is not better qualified to pronounce *this* or *that* event repugnant to ideas of Providence, than a child is enabled to pronounce *this* or *that* action of his parent repugnant to discretion.

19. It is false, in conceiving it no part of man's duty to make *open profession* † that he believes there is a God.

Not to *profess* that we believe there is

* See DERNHAM'S Astro-Theology, b. iv. c. 1.

† Established laws of nature are necessary for enabling intelligent creatures to conduct their affairs with wisdom and prudence, and prosecute their ends by proper means; but still it may be fit, that some particular events should not be fixed by general laws, but be directed by particular acts of the Divine government, that so his reasonable creatures may have sufficient inducement to supplicate his aid, his protection and direction, and to depend upon Him for the success of their honest designs.

See Dr. RAY on the "Active Powers of Man," Ess. 4. c. ix, p. 339, edit. 1788.

See *ibid.* p. 345.

I cannot go
Where UNIVERSAL Love not smiles around,
Sustaining all yon orbs and all their sons;
From *seeming* evil still educing good.

— THOMPSON'S HYMN.

† See Bp. SHERLOCK'S Discourse XVI. vol. 3. p. 368, edit. 1764.

a God, is in effect either to deny or to dissemble that God is our Creator and Preserver. But reason can prove such denial contrary to fact; and such dissimulation is irreconcilable with the gratitude, which enforces thankfulness from the creature to his Creator; with the reverence which an Almighty Being can claim * from one who is dependent on Him; and with that love which should prompt every mind of right dispositions, openly and incessantly to extol him to whom it is indebted for so many blessings. Add to this, that he who doth not himself *profess* to believe there is a God, influences others, so far as his example has any weight, to act in the same manner: and thus he is instrumental towards what we have already proved contradictory to right reason, the exclusion of God and his providence from the government of the universe.

20. It is false, in discouraging religious worship. For, by so doing, it acts in contradiction to that gratitude, which, on a principle of moral obligation, is due from man who receives, to God, who confers so many and so great benefits; and inconsistently with that prudence which directs all who desire a continuance of blessings, to supplicate the giver of them for such continuance. Then again, it is in opposition both to the nature of man, who is made capable of religious sentiments indisputably † for religious purposes; and in opposition also to the general consent of mankind, the history of which through all ages, in situations where the mental faculties have been duly improved, shows men to have always agreed in the propriety of observing *some* religious usages, however different may have been their opinions as

to the particular modes of worship they would adopt. Add to this, that neglect of religion tends to impair the most energetic of all motives to the practice of private virtue; by weakening which, and by diminishing private virtue, it leads ultimately to the corruption of public morals; from which corruption proceeds decay of public good, so far as that term implies order, industry, valour, honour, and genuine freedom; qualities which are productive of the greatest glory and of the highest happiness to any nation.

21. It is false, in denying the soul's immortality. For, first it takes for granted what never can be proved, that man is altogether material; which is an arbitrary assumption. Secondly, the assumption itself is false; because it is known that man has properties of thinking, willing, and moving, which belong not to matter, and therefore man must be constituted of something very different from matter. Thirdly, it is presuming on more than the doctrine of chances would allow; for, as we *do* exist in this state, it is at least an *even* chance that we *may* exist in another. Fourthly, it contradicts the apprehensions of the human mind, which on the commission of a crime against morality, anticipates the rendering of an account to an invisible being. Fifthly, it is repugnant to the general expectation of mankind. Whether that expectation be the result of tradition, or of reason, or of some peculiar principle in the constitution of man, is nothing to the purpose; the fact is, expectation of a future state has universally and through all ages prevailed. Sixthly, it is prejudicial to the interests of mankind, as it tends to exterminate a doctrine of the greatest moral utility, the doctrine of future retribution. Seventhly, it is irreconcilable with the moral attributes of the Deity; for it taketh away that, which if allowed, at once removes *

* *Hic omnia regit, non ut anima mundi, sed ut universorum Dominus; et propter dominium suum Dominus Deus παντοκρατωρ dici solet. Nam Deus est vox relativa et ad servos refertur: et Deitas est dominatio Dei non in corpus proprium (ut sentiunt quibus Deus est anima mundi) sed in servos.*

NEWTONI Principia,
L. 3. Scholium Generale.

† *Indisputably*; for it is an allowed axiom that Nature, & c. God, does nothing in vain. Dicunt utique philosophi, Natura nihil agit frustra.

NEWTONI principia, L. 3. Reg. 1. Philosoph.

* Allow only the present life to be connected with a better, and every objection to Divine benevolence ceases of course. Is it not then more reasonable to admit and maintain this connexion, than to oppose our visionary difficulties (founded, for the most part, on the narrowness of our views, and the obscurity of our conceptions) to those innumerable marks of wisdom

all objections to the wisdom and goodness of God in the dispensations of his providence, objections raised on the supposed or real existence of partial evil. Thus much even natural religion could answer: but Revelation speaks more confidently, and says, assuredly there shall be a resurrection of the just and the unjust.

Between the revelation which asserts, and the philosophy which denies the soul's immortality, there is this striking difference: the former rests all its doctrines on the truth of certain facts; the latter can proceed only on conjecture: of course, the one is as much more deserving of credit than the other, as experimental knowledge is a more sure guide than speculative theory.

22. It is false, in disclaiming divine assistance to the human mind.

The strength of his body, and the faculties of his mind, man derives originally from God. Whether he receives them *immediately* from his Maker, or through the intervention of second causes, the case is the same in effect, for he must in either case alike refer it ultimately to God. The talents then, which in vague and indistinct language we call *natural* endowments, are the gift of God; and they are bestowed in degrees which differ* exceedingly, not only in different persons, but at different times in the same person. This diversity proceeds very frequently not from any concurrence of the human will, nor from the apparent operation of any physical cause: it results from the energy of some power which man can neither see explain, nor command; that power which we term Divine.

The essence of divine power is to work

and goodness, which shine forth through the whole creation?

Dr. BALGUY's *Divine Benevolence*, p. 102.

* It ought likewise to be observed, that as active power in man, and in every created being, is the gift of God, it depends entirely on his pleasure for its existence, its degree, and its continuance, and therefore can do nothing which He does not see fit to permit.

Dr. REID on the "Active Powers of Man."

Ess. 4. c. v. p. 310.

*all things not implying a contradiction,** As it confers ability to the mind in one degree, it may confer the same to degrees infinite; it may increase and strengthen the moral faculties in any measure whatever; for being omnipotent in its nature, it can experience no other restraint than what to the Supreme Being, in whom it resides, may seem expedient. Thus then it is evident, that if it be the *will* of God to grant divine assistance to the human mind, he certainly hath the *power* to grant such aid.

That he should have the *will*, may be conceived from his attributes: for, being himself both just and holy, he cannot but *will* that his rational creatures should be just and holy; and being also good and benevolent, he cannot but be inclined, through his goodness and benevolence, to help those who *would* be just and holy, but who, if left to the mere strength of their own resolution, cannot, through their infirmity, execute the virtuous and pious designs, which in truth and sincerity their minds purpose.

That God then hath the *power* to assist the human mind, is incontrovertible: and that he should have the *will*, may from his attributes fairly be concluded. It remains to be considered, whether he actually doth assist the human mind? And here we have much stronger reasons for affirming, than for denying the question. For in affirming it, we are justified by having proved that God *certainly* is able, and *most probably* is willing to grant assistance; and we moreover have on our part this circumstance, *viz.* that no reasoning of man can possibly ever disprove our assertion, when we maintain that God does assist us. On the other hand those, who disclaim Divine assistance, argue in contradiction to what God *certainly can* and *probably does* effect, and set up their own bare assertion as sufficient to prove, that God does *not* assist the human mind.

But what man is competent to decide

† ——— Contradiction, which to God himself impossible is held, as argument Of weakness, not of power.

MILTON'S *Par. L. l. 799.*

thus peremptorily that God does *not* assist our minds? What finite being can take upon himself to declare all the ways and operations of a Being Infinite?

The disclaiming then of Divine assistance being contrary to the nature of man, who receives *all* his faculties from God; and irreconcilable with the attributes which dispose God to love holiness and to help those who desire to be holy; as moreover it proceeds on an assumption, which neither argument nor fact can ever support to such an extent as to prove that divine assistance is *not* communicated to man; the position is to be given up as not founded on any reasoning admissible in sound philosophy.

23. It is false, in teaching men to think it a matter of indifference, whether they hold right or wrong opinions.

Having received from his Maker, for *good* purposes, a mind as well as a body, man is equally bound to make a proper use of both: and he is alike culpable, whether he knowingly and wilfully contracts intellectual or bodily vices. But wrong opinions are intellectual * vices: and so far as our will is concerned, either in neglecting † to search for truth, or in disqualifying the mind for perceiving it, or in resisting the force of it when perceived; so far our wrong opinions are chargeable on us as crimes, because they proceed from an abuse of those powers, which were intended to help us in forming a right judgment, and which would have led us to just conclusions, unless through our own fault.

It may further be remarked, that as opinions are commonly the principles of action, and it cannot be matter of indif-

ference whether men act right or wrong; so neither can it be indifferent whether their opinions be right or wrong; for, as they think, so in general they act. It is therefore of great consequence that we form right opinions.

What opinions *are* right, we may now easily collect, from the observations which have been made on those that are erroneous. We will briefly state them.

Man, living in society, is subject to restraints; but in return, is entitled to protection of his property, his freedom, and his person. To this protection all who have not, by transgressing the laws, forfeited the benefit of them, have an equal claim: but equality of condition in rank and fortune cannot possibly exist.

The passions of some men would prompt them to violate the rights of others, were they not restricted by laws: hence laws are requisite. But perfection in those laws cannot practically be found, to that degree which speculatively might be wished. Nor ought it to be expected; because, the framers of them are themselves imperfect; and as such, can neither make provisions for all the cases that may possibly require legislative consideration; nor can they foresee all the various ways, in which the provisions they do make may possibly operate. Particular laws relating to particular circumstances and individual persons, may be readily amended as occasion makes it necessary: but with respect to a complicated system, that embraces a large community, and where consequences of great moment would proceed from alteration, sufficient it is if laws *upon the whole* are as good as circumstances will admit. When such they are, a change of them is not capriciously and precipitately to be attempted; more especially if in the attempt we hazard the losing of what is confessedly good, and have reason to fear the adopting of what eventually may prove extremely pernicious.

Of those privileges, which we claim under the law, the perversion is criminal; and concern for the general welfare requires the checking of such perversion; lest those who observe the laws should ultimately be deprived of their privileges; which would be the case, not only if the

* The neglect of keeping our minds in such an equal frame, the not applying of our thoughts to consider of such matters of moment, as do highly concern a man to be rightly informed in, must needs be a vice.

Bp. WILKINS's Principles, &c. l. 1. §. 3. 6.

† The man, who neglects the means of improvement in the knowledge of his duty, may do very bad things, while he follows the light of his mind. And though he be not culpable for acting according to his judgment, he may be very culpable for not using the means of having his judgment better informed.

Dr. RAY on the "Active Powers of Man," Ess. 3. c. viii. p. 256. ed. 1788.

governing power should exceed the due measure of authority ; but equally so, if there should prevail an intemperate misapplication of liberty to bad purposes.

The end of law is justice. The idea of justice arises from a presumption that something is in itself *right* and something *wrong*. No circumstances can warrant the intentional commission of *wrong* ; because the observing of *right* is our duty both in private and public life. The truth of these sentiments is proved by the salutary influence of them in the history of mankind through all ages : they are not therefore to be abandoned for speculative extravagances, destructive to man ; nor is man allowed to sacrifice the dictates of reason to the violence of passion.

There is in man an active an intelligent principle, distinct from matter, and unlike to it, which we call mind. By this we are led to conclude, from the works of creation, that there must be a God ; and from the historical evidence of facts, that Christianity must be true. In reasoning on the nature and the works of God, and in examining circumstances related in the Gospels, however incompetent we may find our understanding to resolve questions, which may arise to our thoughts ; yet such incompetency cannot destroy, cannot weaken the positive certainty of *facts* ; those *facts* on which we rest our faith, and by conviction of which we embrace a religion, in itself most excellent, though by its professors corrupted, or misapplied, the religion of the Gospel.

The reasoning of our minds discerns the Providence of God ; whom *openly* to acknowledge and to adore, is a duty of moral obligation, a duty of prudence, a duty consonant with the nature of man, and corresponding with the universal practice of mankind.

The views of man are not to be confined to the present state of existence only ; that he hath a soul destined for immortality, both natural and moral arguments tend strongly to demonstrate, and revelation expressly declares. To prepare himself for happiness in a state of immortality, by discharging the duties assigned him here, is the great business of man's life : in which important work, his endeavours to be just and holy will be

forwarded by divine assistance, if he will supplicate the Almighty for spiritual aid.

This is a summary of right opinions, resulting from a view of those doctrines which would render us unfit for society, disaffected to our country, regardless of moral virtue, and careless about religion.

It might have been conceived, that philosophy, so prejudicial as well as false, would every where have been holden in the detestation it deserves, did not experience unhappily shew, that it hath influence much too extensive. For the reception it hath found, is to be assigned this cause, viz. that it immediately and in the most flattering manner applies to the appetites, which it indulges without restraint ; whereas detection of its fallacies, and the cultivation of true philosophy require controul of sensual affections and vigorous exercise of reason. But then on the other hand it is to be remembered, that in the very circumstance of applying itself to the lower faculties of human nature, and indeed commonly to the most ignorant part of mankind, it betrays a consciousness of its own inferiority to that wisdom, which claims the attention of intellect and thought. Grovelling* therefore as it is, let it be rejected with high disdain by every mind, that feels a commendable pride in being endued with powers not merely brutal, but rational. And those who have not yet perceived by reflection the faculties of their own mind, nor have attained to a due sense of the capacity for improvement with which they are born ; such persons will do well, to trust the experience of others, until their own judgment is mature ; they will

* The terms, in which Bp. Wilkins speaks of the Epicurean philosophy, are strictly and literally applicable to the false philosophy of the present age :

“ It doth debase the understanding of man, and all the principles in him that are sublime and generous, extinguishing the very seeds of honour, and piety, and virtue, affording no room for actions or endeavours that are truly great and noble ; being altogether unworthy of the nature of man, and doth reduce us to the condition of beasts.”

Principles of Natural Religion,
l. ii. c. ix. p. 406..

do well, to rely on the veracity of the serious and inquisitive, who after patient research assure them of a truth, that all the paradoxes of false philosophy are but snares of sophistry, calculated to seduce them from maxims of approved excellence, and from principles which have been known and seen to be most salutary, in their tendency to ensure the safety, advance the dignity, and promote the rational happiness of man!

Unless there be allowed some first principles, some fundamental axioms, to which we may refer as standards of truth, there can be no rule either in moral or mathematical science, by which to determine whether an argument be just, or false. In denying therefore all these first principles, in which mankind have universally agreed, false philosophy shews its *folly*. For *folly* it is to oppose reason; and nothing surely can be more in opposition to reason, than to undermine the very groundwork of all reasoning.

In points of discussion not recondite, an enlarged mind very soon discerns the intermediate connexion between the subject and the conclusion; it requires not therefore every *minute* consequence to be distinctly marked in the series of argumentation; nor does it interrupt the course of reasoning by starting futile and frivolous objections. False philosophy discovers its *littleness*, in not having comprehension capable of reaching from the question to the proof through the leading and more prominent steps of the argument: it calls for a multiplicity of deductions; demands that propositions of the simplest kind should be proved with precision unnecessarily scrupulous; raises difficulties, where sound sense would immediately and unerringly decide; and cavils if in the course of argument a single inference be left to be drawn by common understanding, and not absolutely stated in express terms.

By this *folly* and *littleness* in what he would correct, the advocate of truth is compelled to establish maxims, which to the plainest apprehension might appear incontrovertible; and forced to produce demonstration for the justness of positions, which by a mind unsophisticated, might have been supposed admissible on their own self-evidence.

These remarks are here subjoined, to satisfy the reader, that of the arguments and proofs used in this discourse, in defence of the better cause, none are superfluous. Such indeed some of them might well have been considered, were it not become a practice, in morals and philosophy alike vicious, either positively to deny or captiously to dispute the validity of opinions, in their nature indubitable, as that there is light at noon-day. But this sceptical hesitation about known truths is equally far from indicating strength of mind, as that deficiency, which nauseates ordinary sustenance, is contrary to the symptom of a firm constitution.

SERMON CLXIII.

BY GEO. ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D. D.

Bishop of Gloucester.

On the Preaching of Our Lord.

ST. MATTHEW, 17. 17.

From that time Jesus began to preach.

THOUGH on the work of reformation in the conduct of mankind, our Lord was indeed continually so intent, that he suffered not even common occurrences to pass unnoticed,* but raised from them instructions for spiritual improvement; yet we often find him also discoursing not in a general way, but with a more direct view to some particular points, either of doctrine or information, which he designed at each period to communicate. His manner of preaching at these seasons varies with the occasion: sometimes it is didactic; sometimes parabolic; sometimes prophetic. On these several modes of his preaching let us now make some remarks.

When Christ by his miracles† had given sufficient proof that he was endued with more than human power, he proceeded on his ministry with encouraging men to cultivate affections of piety; and with enlarging the sense to which interpreters had confined and limited the Mosaic precepts.‡ On those, who through repentance were contrite, and afflicted for their sins; on the meek, the holy, the merciful, the pure, the patient; on those, who would not relinquish their virtue and faith through any fears of temporal evil; on all such he pronounced a blessing.† To exemplary conduct and vital principles of real goodness he exhorts his

* See Sir ISAAC NEWTON'S *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, part i. c. 11. n. (a); and Dr. JORTIN'S *Discourses concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion*, vi. 5. Archbishop NEWCOMBE'S *Observations on our Lord's Conduct*, part i. s. 6. p. 100. ed. 1795. "Quicquid vita communis obtulit, hoc fere vertit in occasionem docendæ pietatis." Ratio Veræ Theologiæ ESSENTI, V. 5, 116. C.

† St. Matt. iv. 24.

‡ St. Matt. v.

disciples; bidding them not to acquiesce in the bare observance of the letter, but rather to obey the spirit of the law; and enjoining them to shew the sincerity of their faith in him, by restraining anger, and forgiving injuries, by resisting irregular passions and abandoning secret sins, by avoiding all expressions that may derogate from the dignity and the sanctity of God's name; by extending liberality to all in distress, without distinction of sect, party, or country; and by bearing even towards enemies a degree of love, which should incline us to treat them with all the kindness that prudent regard for our own safety can possibly admit.

As the end and object of all religion is to turn man unto God, and under a sense of duty towards his Maker to influence his heart and correct his morals, that he may think and act as becomes a spiritual being sensible of his obligations towards God, duly estimating the rational powers conferred on him, and earnestly hoping to be blessed with divine approbation both in this and a future life; as this is the end and object of all religion, our Lord in his wisdom laid the foundation of Christianity in truths respecting God and moral goodness.

After longer intercourse with his disciples, he delivers to them parables; and for his adopting this method of preaching, may be assigned the following reasons.

Conversant as they were with the writings of the Old Testament, the Jews were acquainted with this manner of instruction, which had been used by prophets in former ages. The remonstrance of Jotham* with the men of Sichem, and the reproof of Nathan† to David, were both conveyed, the one by an apposite, the other by an interesting parable, which were well known to our Saviour's disciples. In speaking therefore to them after this manner, he addressed them in a style suited indeed to the genius of Orientals in general, but more particularly calculated to engage the attention of Jews who had been accustomed to hear from persons of prophetic character ‡ sayings of this nature.

The parables of our Lord were moreover all intended for illustration to those who came with dispositions to be taught, and who would employ some attention in properly applying them. But the degree of illustration is not always designed to be the same. In some it is meant the conclusion should be drawn with little difficulty: in others, the inference was purposely more obscure. †

The parables which most easily admit of interpretation are these:

The sower; ‡ which represents the different dispositions of those who would hear the Gospel, and the different influence that would accordingly be produced by it on their minds and conduct. The tares, § and the net cast into the sea; || which intimate the mixture of good and bad men under the Gospel, as under all other dispensations; yet that, upon the whole, it is better the punishment of the wicked should be delayed to the consummation of all things, than that it should be speedily ¶ executed. The grain, and the heaven; ** of which, the one signifies the growing extent of the Gospel from an inconsiderable beginning; the other, that change which silently and gradually it should produce in the hearts and actions of men. The hidden treasure, and pearl of great price; †† which teach us that the Gospel is of value so inestimable, that to the possession of it should be sacrificed all considerations. The unmerciful servant; †‡ whence we learn, that if we hope to receive forgiveness of our own sins from God, we must pardon the offences men

frequentant vates sacri, ac præ cæteris omnibus Ezekiel.

Bp. Lowth's "Prælectio de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum," x. p. 126. ed. 1775.

† Faciunt enim parabolas ad involuendum et velum; faciunt etiam ad lumen et illustrationem.

BACON "de Sapientia Veterum," Præfatio, vol. ii. p. 349. Q. ed. 1730.

See also Lib. 2. "de Augmentis Scientiarum," vol. i. p. 80. At Poesis Parabolica, &c.

‡ St. Matt. xiii. 3. § St. Matt. xiii. 24.

|| St. Matt. xiii. 47.

¶ See Bp. Sherlock's Discourse VIII. vol. iii.

** St. Matt. xiii. 31—33.

†† St. Matt. xiii. 44, 5.

†‡ St. Matt. xviii. 23.

* Judges, ix. 8.

† 2 Sam. xii. 1—7.

‡ Hanc in pœsi præcipuè prophetica multum

have committed against us. The ten virgins,* which gives a lesson on the necessity of vigilance in the work of pious and moral conduct at all seasons, since we know not how soon we may die, and as we die, so shall we be judged. The different talents;† by which we are exhorted to make a proper use of the several gifts imparted to us by Providence, be they external or internal, bodily or mental. The good Samaritan;‡ which inculcates charity as due to all men, however they may differ from us, either by national connexion, or in religious persuasion. The rich man enlarging his barns;§ whose example shews the folly of such immoderate attachment to our possessions, as shall make us forget God and our latter end. The unjust steward;|| which intimates to us, that we should make conducive to our salvation the various natural, moral, and spiritual gifts with which we are entrusted by God for his glory; and admonishes us also, that we should be equally attentive to religious concerns, as the most artful and iniquitous are intent on devising means by which to gain pecuniary advantages. The prodigal son;¶ which encourages us to hope, that God will be merciful to us if we sincerely repent. The rich man and Lazarus;** teaching us the misery in which must terminate that careless indifference to religious concerns, so frequently found in a voluptuous life. The widow importuning the unjust judge;†† which enforces perseverance in prayer. The publican and pharisee;‡‡ in commendation of humility, and reproof of self-righteousness.

All these parables to a considerate mind would give illustration, if they were taken according to the design with which they were delivered; a design, §§ which

meant not to preserve, between the similitude and subject, an exact correspondence of minute parts; but to mark, between them such a resemblance in the general outline, as that the subject might be placed in a more striking light; and that the principal truth to be inculcated might be discerned without much labour of investigation. And for this purpose, as it was unnecessary to regard conformity in the several circumstances, so it was perfectly indifferent whether the story introduced were taken from real life, or were altogether fictitious; and whether the characters* were good or bad. The reflection, which was to be made on the whole, was the principal object: and if the parable taken together impresses on the mind that sentiment, which was the scope of it, the intent of teaching by that mode is fully answered.

The parables that could not be so readily explained, because alluding to events which at the time our Lord spake did not seem probable, and therefore were incomprehensible to the generality of his audience, were these:

The labourers in the vineyard;† intimating that to the spiritual blessings of Christ, ty the Gentiles should be admitted equally with the Jews, who had hitherto been the sole worshippers of the true God. The husbandmen who slew the heir,‡ and seized on the vineyard; signifying the insults which the Jews had offered to a succession of former prophets; the death which they were now meditating against our Lord himself; and the divine vengeance which awaited them for this last act of iniquity. The

See also Archbishop Newcome on 'Our Lord's Conduct,' p. 144. ed. 1

Add GLASSIUS: In parabolis enim nec possunt nec debent omnia ad rem primario intellectam accommodari, sed ea tantum quæ proximè scopum dicentis spectant.

Philologia Sacra, l. 2. p. 1. Tr. 2. 4. 4. art. 2. p. 218.

* Historia est narratio rei verè gestæ: parabola verò rei factæ et ad docendum aptè coniecturata. Ibid.

Among an infinitude of other very judicious and satisfactory remarks, which abound in "POOLE'S ANNOTATIONS," are two pertinent notes on St. Matt. xiii. 2. and St. Luke, xvi. 8.

† St. Matt. xx. 1. ‡ St. Matt. xxi. 33.

* St. Matt. xxv. 1. † St. Matt. xxv. 15.

† St. Luke, x. 30. § St. Luke, xii. 16.

|| St. Luke, xvi. 8. ¶ St. Luke, xv. 11.

** St. Luke, xvi. 19: †† St. Luke, xviii. 2.

‡‡ St. Luke, xviii. 9.

§§ Minime quidem necessarium est, ut in omni parabola per omnia accuratè constet similitudinis ratio; hoc interdum consensuatis cujusdam nimis minutè potius esset.

De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum Prælect. 10. p. 129.

marriage of the king's son;* predicting that the Jews should be rejected, and the Gentiles invited to the Christian dispensation: but though among the Gentiles many would be called to the knowledge of the Gospel by the preaching of its ministers, yet, comparatively speaking, few would so prepare themselves by holiness of life as to be objects of divine approbation.† The fig-tree fruitless for three years;‡ which implies, that Christ had in vain looked for repentance and reformation among the Jews; their state therefore should be destroyed, and their nation scattered.

These parables could not be solved with equal facility as the others were expounded; because nothing but the accomplishment of extraordinary circumstances could throw on them light sufficient for the full apprehending of them. And our Lord purposely foretold those events with a degree of obscurity, that the indignation of the scribes and pharisees might not be raised to a degree of sudden madness, which should precipitate his death before his ministry was completed, and before the time appointed for the sacrifice of himself was duly arrived.

Thus then did our Lord speak in parables, of which those that inculcated evangelical duties were easy to be explained, but those that predicted the approaching change in the Jewish state, and the establishment of the Gospel dispensation, were less obvious to interpretation. And this manner of teaching he appears to have adopted, partly in imitation of former prophets, and partly with the view of making distinction§ between those who really wished to be informed, and others who were obstinately and wilfully determined not to be convinced. To the former, he purposed that his words should convey instruction upon that due exercise of their thoughts, which he knew they would bestow: to the latter, § he

meant that his parables should be as sounds only, since they would employ not the smallest consideration to investigate the sense. In this manner it happens in natural religion. God speaks to us by his works. He is understood by those who maturely reflect on them: but he is neither heard nor seen by others, who behold his works with indifference. It is neither the province, nor the nature, nor commonly speaking, in the power of religion to force conviction: it recommends itself to the understanding of every observing person; but if man will not observe, nor apply his understanding, it leaves him to pursue his own inattention, and to take the consequences of such irrational conduct. As a knowledge of God is not palpable to the thoughtless, so neither was a knowledge of the Gospel to be attained by men to whom it appeared unworthy of regard.* And thus did the Son of God act in perfect analogy with the wisdom of his Almighty Father; and the dispensations of nature and grace are both calculated for beings endued with reason. From the very frame of our constitution, bodily and mental, we are required to use that reason in searching after truth; but we are nevertheless free not to use our reason properly, if we love brutish stupidity rather than improvement of intellect; if we prefer darkness to light, and evil to good; if we would alienate ourselves from God for the sake of degrading vices that must sink us in the scale of ra-

ERASMUS, the exemplar and favourite writer of his biographer Dr. JORTIN, on our Lord's use of parables remarks thus:

"Sive id Christo visum est, quo prophetarum sermonem, cui Judaeorum aures adsuverant, referret: sive hæc difficultate significationem nostram exercere voluit, ut postea gratior esset fructus, non sine negotio quesitus: sive hoc consilio sua mysteria profanis et impiis opera celataque esse voluit, at sic, ut interim piis scrutatoribus non intercluderetur adsequendi spes: sive genus hoc dictionis potissimum placuit, quod ut ad persuadendum cum primis efficax est, ita doctis pariter et indoctis expositum et familiare, maximeque secundum naturam."

RATIO VERÆ THEOLOGIÆ. ERASM. Op. V. §. p. 117. A.

See also Dr. TOWNSON'S SERMON on "The Manner of our Saviour's Teaching," subjoined to his ingenious Discourses on the Gospels, p. 283. ed. 2.

* St. Matth. xxii. 1. † St. Luke, xiii. 6.

‡ St. Matth. xiii. 11.

§ No parables could be thought too obscure for them, upon whom the plainest doctrines and the testimony of miracles had been thrown away.

Dr. JORTIN'S, vol. ii. Serm. XII. p. 236. ed. 1771.

tional creatures and must terminate in misery. Man hath liberty to choose either life or death but when he hath made his choice, if it be on the worse part, let him not reproach his Maker, who gave him reason, and created him free. Let God be justified, but man self-condemned for his own egregious folly.

The prophecies delivered by our Lord come next to be considered. When by his discourses and miracle he had evidently proved his divine mission, he begins to forwarn his disciples of the great events which were soon to befall him self, & of which some would in the first place so astonish them, as even to make them disbelieve his pretensions to the title of Messiah, when others again should operate on their minds with such strong conviction, that no punishment, no torments, nor death could hurt him, could possibly mitigate their agony while their own eyes had seen, and their own ears had heard. That he is to suffer many things of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, must be killed, and be raised again the third day, was the first intimation of his approaching end, suggested to his hearers. The bare mention of his sufferings was received with disapprobation, inasmuch that our Lord instantly passed to an earnest exhortation, by which to animate his disciples against renouncing their faith through fear of afflictions † and at a period not far distant, having exhibited himself in a glorified form, he again impresses on their minds the resurrection, as a circumstance to which they should look forward with peculiar attention, since it was to produce an effect entirely contrary to the doubts and apprehensions which would be raised in their hearts by his intermediate humiliation. We find our Lord a second time predicting the evils that awaited him, in terms similar to those before used, with the addition however of a circumstance more express and particular as to the manner in which the rulers should be enabled to apprehend him, “the son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.” ‡

Endued as he was with power to discern the thoughts * of men, he foresaw the treachery which Judas was meditating, but did not yet openly announce it to his disciples that one amongst themselves would be intransigent to his death. A third time he tells what was to be accomplished in him; and is now more circumstantial than in the former prediction for not only the treachery, but the deliverance † of him “to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him,” is here specified, after which it is added also, “and the third day he shall rise again.” A fourth time he speaks of what was to follow, and limits the transaction to a period so near that it might be said he was already betrayed ‡ He renews the same subject a fifth and last time explicitly declaring that one of his own disciples even he who at that moment was eating with him, would be the person to betray him § and after the solemn institution of a sacred meal, which was to be continued as a perpetual memorial of his death he renews them of the apostasy with which they would desert him, but consoles them with a promise of returning to them again when he was risen ||

In the manner of delivering these predictions, remarkable is the tenderness with which our Lord unfolded the particulars of his death by a gradual declaration of circumstances, circumstances which, if abruptly and unseasonably introduced all at the same time, would immediately have overwhelmed his disciples with perplexity and sorrow. By degrees therefore he habituates them to think of his sufferings, prepares them for what would ensue, by adding progressively some fact not mentioned before, and reserves the most bitter and aggravating consideration, that he should be betrayed by one of his own disciples, to the very season when that event was to take place.

On the subjects of these prophecies it is to be observed, that his foretelling, cru-

* St. Matt. xvi. 21. † St. Matt. xvi. 24.

‡ St. Matt. xvi. 22.

* St. John, ii. 24. St. Mark, xii. 15.

† St. Matt. xx. 19.

‡ St. Matt. xxvi. 2. § St. Matt. xxvi. 21.

|| St. Matt. xxvi. 32.

cifixion, as the mode by which he should suffer, was a proof of his possessing divine prescience: for, as crucifixion was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment, and he had committed no crime which should make him obnoxious to the Roman governor, so it seemed not probable* to human apprehension that by the Roman law he should be crucified, and not by the Jewish law stoned.

The limiting† of his resurrection to the *third day*, gave strong presumption, even before he rose, that his former assertions had been founded in truth; for had he spoken otherwise than according to truth, he would not have rested the whole veracity and validity of his mission on an event that was to happen within a space so very short; but would have built it on some fact, which the generation then present could never have seen. But as the case now stands, we are to remain in a state of suspense only *three* days, and then it shall be manifested by the resurrection of a person, whose side shall be pierced, whose body shall be buried, and who shall lie in the grave two nights and one whole day; by the resurrection of such a person, within so brief an interval as that of *three* days, it shall be manifested whether he did or did not speak truth. A more fair test of sincerity could not be proposed, nor could pretensions be placed on an issue more palpable: here could be no misapprehension, no mistake: the crucifixion was notorious, the wounds visible, the burial uncontroverted: on the question, whether our Lord did or did not rise from the dead, turns the principal argument either for or against the truth of Christianity. That he did rise, is a fact asserted by positive history, and confirmed by collateral evidence, strongly and authentically as any fact‡ whatever, in the records of any age or country that has ever existed.

That the Jews should be punished for their infidelity and wickedness, had been intimated by several prophetic parables: but towards the close of his ministry, our Lord speaks in more direct terms of the calamities which awaited their nation. Persecuted though he had been by the chief persons among them, and foreseeing as he did the aggravated cruelty with which they would soon destroy him, yet with compassion he softened the severity of his judgment; "he wept* over the city," the desolation of which he foretold; and bewailed† most pathetically the blindness and obstinacy which had darkened their understandings, and hardened their hearts against the evidences he had produced in support of his just claim to the title of Messiah! In the predictions concerning the fall of the temple and of Jerusalem, we are to observe not only the circumstantial manner in which events, at that time improbable,‡ are distinctly marked out; but the exact period, within which the accomplishment of these facts was expressly confined. The generation§ then existing was not to pass away; that is, forty years were not to elapse, before these predictions would be verified: and therefore it was not beyond the course of nature to imagine, that many of those who then heard him would be alive at the conclusion of the determinate era, and would have ocular demonstration how far his prophecies were, or were not fulfilled. In this case, therefore, as in that of the resurrection, our Lord rests his pretensions to veracity on a fact, the accomplishment of which was circumscribed within a given space of time; a fact too, so palpable in its nature, that it could not possibly admit of a doubt whether it did or did not happen: for the destruction of a city

* St. Luke, xix. 41. † St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

‡ "In the reign of Tiberius there was no appearance of such an event, and much less of the various circumstances attending it, which he foretold. The Romans had no interest to destroy and depopulate a country which was subject to them, and whence they reaped many advantages; and the Jews had not strength to hope for success in a war against them."

Dr. JOHNSON'S "Remarks on Ecclesiastical History," p. 77. vol. i. edit. 1751.

§ St. Matt. xxiv. 34.

* See note on St. Matt. xx. 19. in Sect. 142. of Dr. DODDGE'S "Family Expositor."

† See p. 287. of Archbishop NEWCOMB'S "Observations on our Lord's Conduct," ed. 1795.

‡ See Bp. SHERLOCK'S Trial of the Witnesses; WESTON'S Resurrection; PALMER'S Evidences; and HENRY'S Credibility of the Gospel History.

like Jerusalem must be an event so extraordinary, that the whole Roman empire must hear of its demolition. Here then is another presumption that our Lord spake truth, arising from a second instance of limitation assigned to the period in which his prediction was to be fulfilled: and that presumption is changed into positive proof, by the manner in which, within the prefixed period, his prophecies were not only fulfilled in a general way, but almost literally accomplished in every minute* and particular incident: and the evidence produced from the completion of prophecies respecting Jerusalem is so irrefragable, that its force can be evaded by nothing but the disingenuous shift of recurring to a supposition contradicted by histories, the date of which histories is ascertained with equal precision as the date of any ancient writings can possibly be ascertained. And there is wanting neither internal proof, nor current opinion from the earliest ages of Christianity, that three of the Gospels were written antecedently to the fall of Jerusalem.†

Having remarked thus much on the morals, the parables, and prophecies of Christ, we may draw a conclusion which will scarcely be controverted, viz. that they evince in him a degree of wisdom not commonly found among men. But let us now ask, "whence‡ had Christ this wisdom?" As it is a question of importance, and therefore deserves to be fairly discussed, with all humility and lowliness of mind let us proceed on an inquiry, the result of which will be a strong confirmation of our faith in Christ as the

Saviour through whom we have redemption; and as the Lord whom we are bound to worship and obey.

Considering then, yet with profound reverence, the human nature of our Lord, we can discover but four possible ways by which his mind could be thus enlightened; and these are, either by the aid of instructors, or by the study of writings, or by superior understanding, or by divine communication.

The learning of the Jews was in general confined to the knowledge of the law, the prophets, the Hagiographa,* and traditions. Whatever instruction was imparted to Christ, must have proceeded either from his reputed parents,† or from the scribes who were teachers‡ in their schools and synagogues. From the one, it is probable he could hear nothing but the plain letter of the Scriptures: from the other, he would receive expositions corresponding with the tenets either of the pharisees,§ or sadducees, or essenes. But the refined interpretation of the moral law, which is the peculiar beauty of the sermon on the mount, as it far exceeds the simplicity in which his parents must have taught him, so it partakes not of any principle that characterises either of the sects which in his days prevailed. It encourages neither the loose|| morals of the sadducees, nor the formal and traditional observances of the pharisees, nor the excessive austerities of the essenes.¶ It is enlarged to the extent which the spirit of the law will fairly justify; it abrogates tradition and merely external service; it accommodates itself to every condition of social life. These pecu-

* See Bishop NEWTON'S Dissertations XVIII. XIX. XX. XXI. on the Prophecies; and Archbishop NEWCOMB'S "Observations on our Lord's Conduct," p. 212—276. ed. 1795.

† See Bishop NEWTON'S Dissertation XVIII. p. 326 vol. ii. edit. 1771.

Dr. PALEY'S Evidences, p. 86. vol. ii. ed. 1st.

Dr. LARDNER'S Works, ed. 1788, vol. vi. p. 38—44. and *ibid.* p. 145.

Dr. JOHNSON'S "Remarks on Ecclesiastical History," vol. i. p. 73. where the reader will find many minute circumstances of internal proof judiciously observed.

‡ St. Matt. xiii. 54. Dr. PALEY hath put the same question; and the reader cannot do better than see how it is answered in the "Evidences," vol. ii. p. 136. ed. 1st, p. 132.

* See GRAY'S "Key to the Old Testament," Introduction, p. 10. ed. 2d.

† See MACKNIGHT'S Harmony, Note, s. 13.

‡ See "The Old and New Testament connected," &c. by Dr. PRIDEAUX, part 2. b. 5. s. 4. p. 483. vol. iii. edit. 1749.

§ See PRIDEAUX, part ii. b. 5. s. 2. &c.

|| See PRIDEAUX, part ii. b. 5. s. 2. p. 472. vol. iii.

¶ "He never provokes our disgust by the sourness of the misanthrope; or our contempt, by the inactivity of the recluse. He never affected gloomy austerity; nor sought to be sequestered from the world, in order to preserve the spirituality of his mind."

See the whole of Sermon V. in the Ba Lectures, preached by Dr. WHITS.

liarities, which distinguish the Gospel morality from all the doctrines then adopted by the Jews, are evident proofs, that although our Lord undoubtedly heard the Scriptures both read and explained by others; * yet his mode of interpretation is so far his own, as not to be the effect of any instruction derived from teachers; because there were no teachers capable of giving him this interpretation. But were the case otherwise, and had he been instructed to a degree not common among the Jews of his age, still the aid of instructors could have extended no farther than to the communication of knowledge in the moral science; it could have availed him nothing in the conception of parables, and the prediction of future events. The aid of instructors therefore is totally inadequate to account for his wisdom.

That every part of the sacred writings was known by the mind of our Lord, is obvious from his frequent reference to passages in various parts of the Old Testament: and to some of these he most probably alluded in the former part of his sermon on the mount†. The Psalmist declares, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit‡:" our Lord pronounces a benediction§ on "the poor in spirit," and "on those that mourn." In Isaiah it is said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word||:" the promise of our Lord is, "Blessed are the meek." The psalmist asserts, that he only can serve God acceptably, who has "clean hands

* His parents found him at an early age "in an apartment of the Temple, where the teachers of the law used to lecture upon it to the people; and where young persons in particular were examined, and had a liberty to ask what questions they thought proper, for their farther information."

DOBDAINCE on St. Luke, ii. 46.

On that occasion he confirmed the remark of the Evangelist, that Christ "waxed strong in spirit; filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." St. Luke, vii. 40.

† See CHAYSOEOM, vol. vii. p. 693. edit. Paris, 1616.

‡ Ps. xxiv. 18. See also Ps. li. 17.

§ St. Matt. v.

|| Isa. lvi. 2. See also Mic. vi. 8.

and a pure heart: ** in our Saviour's words, "Blessed are the pure in heart."

When he had finished the beatitudes, he professedly enters on the moral laws of Moses. To remove the false interpretations by which the Scribes and Pharisees had obscured the beauty and perverted the excellence of the moral law, was a considerable† object of his mission.

The prohibition of murder in the sixth commandment, the Jews had limited merely to the literal interpretation. Our Lord extends it to the forbidding of such anger and malice, as may in their consequences lead to murder. And on this occasion he seems to have enlarged on these words of Moses; "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself‡." Which last expression the teachers of the Law had so misinterpreted, as to make it imply that an enemy might be hated.§ Our Lord corrects this improper exposition: in doing which he may be conceived to have in his view, either the humane precept of Moses, which ordains, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again: if thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him||." For if even the beast of an enemy were thus to be assisted, much more were his own person to be relieved from distress. Or our Lord may have adverted to this admonition of Solomon; "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."¶ In that comprehensive summary of relative and social duty, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," ** it is not impossible

* Ps. xxiv. 4.

† See "The Jewish Law vindicated," in Sermons X. and XI. by the late Dr. RANDOLPH.

‡ Levit. xix. 17, 18. § St. Matt. v. 43.

|| Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. The humane regard which is had even to fowls of the air and brute animals, is singular and admirable in the Mosaic law.

¶ Prov. xxv. 21. ** St. Matt. vii. 12.

that our Lord might have in his thoughts the instruction of Tobit, "Do that to no man, which thou hatest."* But on all these occasions, the words of our Lord are of greater force and wider extent than what immediately appear in the terms of the Old Testament. In his general rule of conduct, for instance, our Lord does not confine himself to a negative prohibition, but enjoins a positive duty.† Universal charity he inculcates in the emphatic words, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you."‡ And to language of reproach that proceeds from malicious thoughts, he threatens the severity of future punishment.§ Well therefore may he be said to have made full the moral law, not only by restoring its original purity, but by adding to it an energy and latitude of meaning which before it did not possess." It was indeed at all times in itself "Holy, just and good."|| but as the latter dispensation was always designed to be the more excellent covenant, it was reserved for Christ in his appointed time to dilate precepts which heretofore had been delivered with the brevity of elementary principles.

When we hear our Lord thus expounding and establishing morals, it is not enough to observe the comprehension with which he embraced all that was intrinsically virtuous in the law and the prophets; but it should farther be remarked, that although he did indeed make the Scriptures of the Old Testament the ground of his doctrine, yet by the manner in which he treats his subjects, the moral precepts of all who went before him assume a different and more striking appearance; inasmuch that they come from him in a great degree new: new, not only to the audience in whose hearing they were explained, and to whom, from their being set forth without the veil of glosses, they really were new; but, comparatively speaking, they are

new to us, who have the letter of Scripture with which to contrast our Lord's interpretation. Patience under injuries and charity unbounded, however they may be deduced from the commands and admonitions contained in the Old Testament, cannot yet be said to meet our view as prominent features in the law and the prophets: much less is restraint on the very first conceptions of inordinate propensity a leading character in those ancient writings. But forbearance, benevolence, and purity of intention, are the very life and essence of Christian morality, presenting themselves in every page, and interwoven in every letter of the Gospel.

Hence then it appears, that however Christ may have laid the foundation of his wisdom in Scripture-knowledge, yet the superstructure which he raised is the work of his own mind. For, in his manner of elucidating former precepts, and in making the exercise of kind affections and the repression of irregular thoughts so indispensably necessary, as that they should be distinguishing marks of sincerity in his disciples; in these very material and discriminating points our Lord derived his wisdom from no Jewish writings.

For the sake of argument, let us now conceive that our Lord might have been acquainted with the writings of Greece, and that he might have remarked in them some tenets confessedly excellent. That from those writings he should adopt any precepts corresponding with doctrines of morality already found in the Old Testament, would have been unnecessary; that supposition therefore is out of the question, because nugatory. But let us imagine he might have observed in them, two maxims which appear most similar to his own characteristics; these for instance; "whatever injury we may have sustained from another person, yet we ought not to do him an injury in return;"* and "it is equally criminal to intend,† as to commit a wicked action." Now as the first of these maxims, al-

* Tobit, iv. 15.

† Gaius's remark.

§ St. Matt. v. 44.

§ Ibid. v. 22.

|| Rom. vii. 12. See "The Jewish Law indicated," by Dr. RANDELPH.

* See PLATO'S Phædo, p. 140, in Forster's edition.

† HæRODOTUS, b. vi. s. 86.

though we should grant (what however there is reason to doubt*) that it is designed to be of universal application, yet when it is compared with the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, it falls short in the *principle* on which it is founded: for it considers only the *injustice* of retaliation: it does not originate from a sense of *benevolence* due to all mankind, as being all brethren and equally the offspring of the same God; much less does it arise from conviction that every man has need of imploring divine mercy for himself, and therefore ought to exercise mercy towards his fellow-creatures. But these are the *principles* from which the Christian doctrine of forgiveness proceeds; principles, more wide in extent, and more powerful in energy than the philosophic *motive*: for the benevolence of charity is more enlarged, active, and humane in its operations; and the persuasion that giving pardon is an indispensable condition for receiving divine pardon, is more forcible in its effect than any abstract idea of justice can possibly be.

With respect to the other maxim, *that* also seems limited to *injustice* only, and not in the smallest degree applicable to the *immorality* of gratifying our irregular desires. Nor does it appear, that in the opinion of philosophers indulgence of sensuality, under certain restrictions, was deemed culpable. There was indeed a sect † which, like the essenes, discouraged wedlock: but that was an excess of austerity not corresponding with the condition of mankind, and therefore warrantable by no law divine or human, and consequently deserving no regard. We are to speak of those who allowed marriage, and prohibited adultery: *they* did not universally forbid acts of licentiousness ‡ which Christianity at all times condemns as contrary to good morals. But for the effectual prevention of such acts, our

Lord lays a restraint, which is meant to operate uniformly and indispensably on the first thought that is impure; and bids us discard vicious propensities, though the labour of doing it be painful “as plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand.”* This is to strike directly and constantly at the very root † of sensuality: it guards the heart from ever giving encouragement to irregular desires: and thus to a degree, not obviously apparent among the philosophers, who either preceded, or lived in the age of our Saviour, it prepares man for cultivating his nobler faculties, intellect and reason, and raises his mind to the high duties of morality and religion.

It cannot be affirmed as a matter of certainty, that the writings of philosophers, either antecedent to the æra of our Saviour, or contemporary with it, did not contain other moral precepts, which at first view might seem to have some correspondence with the distinguishing tenets of Gospel morality. Let the reverse be supposed; and let it be imagined that our Lord saw in them other precept ‡ resembling his own. Yet, if we are allowed to judge either from the entire works, or fragments, or accounts of Grecian authors now extant, we may conclude almost to a positive certainty on two very material points: they are, that no philosopher whatever laid the foundation of his morals in repentance for sins past *on a*

* St. Matt. v. 29, 30.

† See Dr. PALEY'S “Evidences,” vol. ii. p. 111. ed. 1st.

‡ Some such for instance in Greek, as this remark of Ovid in Latin:

Quæ quia non licuit, non facit, illa facit.

Ut jam se caris bene corpus, adultera mens est, Omnibus exclusus intus adulter erit.

Quoted by GROSJUS in L. iv. s. 12. de Veit. Chr. Rel.

Did any similar passages of refined morality in the Greek writings, before the Christian æra, occur to recollection they should on no account be suppressed. For it is anxiously wished that the question should be fairly met. Besides; every demonstration of correspondence subsisting between natural and revealed religion in doctrines intrinsically good, is an additional proof of divine origin in Christianity: for it was one object of our Lord, to restore the original moral law to the pristine purity in which it was delivered by God to Adam; and thus to shew that he was co-operating with God in the work of reformation he had undertaken.

* See “The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation,” by Dr. LELAND, part ii. c. 8. p. 122. ed. t. 1768.

† See Dr. MURRAY'S first Note on the Hippolytus of Euripides. “Deinde autem severissime Philosophiæ, nempe Orphicæ, se adjuvat,” &c.

‡ See “The Advantage,” &c. by Dr. LELAND, part ii. c. 8. p. 133.

principle of religion and of duty towards God; and that no one gave a promise of divine pardon to repentance of this nature, and proceeding from such a principle: on the contrary, there is much reason to suppose that the Greek philosophers had no idea of that repentance which springs from "Godly sorrow;" and as for any assurance of divine mercy upon such repentance, *that no one could give*. It must however be granted, that the beginning of moral instruction could commence from nothing so properly as from exhortations, that should induce men to be ashamed and sorry for their past offences against God and virtue: nor could any motive to repentance of this nature be so persuasive and cogent, as an absolute promise of pardon from Almighty God, which implies a prospect of happiness in a future state. Here then our Lord, as a teacher of morals, stands unparalleled and unrivalled by any philosopher. And as it before appeared that Christian morality excels philosophy in the extent to which it applies the two precepts which dissuade from doing injuries and from conceiving wicked purposes; so it is now manifest that the ground on which our Lord began the work of renovating manners was taken deeper, and was therefore more likely to influence future conduct, than any mode which philosophers adopted: it is evident also, that the argument on which he enforced reformation of morals was more prevalent, because more authoritative and more unmixed with doubt than any inducements which philosophers could presume to hold out as consequences that should *most assuredly* follow, upon amendment of life.

Forgiveness of injuries upon the principle of regarding all men as children of the same God, and on the persuasion that it is a condition of our obtaining pardon from God; repentance for sins past; and the promise of pardon upon such repentance; these doctrines, as they discriminate Christianity from philosophy, and exalt the one far above the other, so they could not be gathered from the writings of philosophers, even though it had been clear that Christ was conversant with such writings. But so far is that circumstance from being clear,

that no supposition can be more *improbable*. For in the first place, the obscure condition in which he was born, would make it almost impossible that he should receive an education so totally different from that of other Jews in Palestine, as would have been the study of Greek philosophy added to that of the Scriptures. In the next place, the paucity of manuscripts was such as ^{to} make it highly improbable that many, if indeed any such, should come into the hands of one circumstanced as he was, in rank not high, in possessions not affluent. Then again it must be recollected, that the Jews in Palestine held the Gentiles in such contempt, that the circulation of their writings throughout Judea would not have been allowed. On these several accounts we may reasonably conclude, that the writings of the Greek* philosophers were totally unknown to Christ, and the very supposition that he might have studied them must be abandoned as quite repugnant to probability, and almost irreconcilable with possibility.

And after all; however he might have gained information from the study of writings sacred or profane with respect to morals, yet towards the invention of his parables, from neither could he have derived any other assistance than that he could have found in them merely the *models* for such compositions; he could not thence have been furnished with subjects and sentiments. The parables and allegories of the prophets and philosophers are many of them very finely imagined; but excepting the parable spoken by Nathan, there is nothing of the kind in all antiquity to be compared† with the simple,

* It were not only visionary, but quite unnecessary to conceive our Lord studying the writings of Roman authors; because their philosophic maxims were copied from the schools of Greek philosophy. Tully, who was the chief and best writer preceding the age of Christ, has nothing excellent which might not have been found in some of the Greek moralists, had their works come down to us entire.

† See Dr. Patey's Evidences, p. 135. vol. II. ed. 1st.

"Neque hunc docendi morem usurpare dignatus est Salvator noster; dubium, sapiens

yet affecting parables of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the rich man and Lazarus, the unmerciful servant.*

On the parables it is moreover to be observed, that imagination and adaptation of the similitude to the subject are not the only circumstances belonging to them: many of them are prophetic; which when we consider, we must ask, what writings could communicate to Christ the wisdom of prophecy, either as it appears more obscurely in his parables, or more directly in his open and unreserved predictions? To the imparting of such wisdom no writings are adequate. If as a moralist, and a teacher by parables he could have received but *little* and from the study of sacred or profane authors, as a prophet he could derive from them absolutely *no* assistance whatever. Let us leave then the idea that his wisdom might have been the result of application to writings, and let us see what can be done by superior understanding.

In the history of mankind are recorded different eras, when the powers of the human mind have been displayed in a manner so signal, as to mark the periods, in which either some individual, or several contemporaries† of distinguished abilities, enlightened the age which gave them existence. Beams of genius, of invention, of knowledge, of art, of science, have suddenly burst out amidst the clouds of intellectual darkness, and have irradiated nations that for centuries had been obscured by a long night of gross ignorance. Reflection on this fact induces us to conceive, that the mind of man may be endowed with uncommon powers equal to the improvement of any and every system of art or science: and it must be allowed, that by the force of

superior understanding.* Christ might have been enabled† to teach his refined morals; as by creative imagination he might have invented those parables which are not prophetic. But when we have made this concession, it must on the other hand be granted, that with such penetration and fancy he must have been a most extraordinary person in his intellectual faculties; for it is not in the usual course of things, nor of daily occurrence, to meet with instances of such moral wisdom as appears in his precepts, or of such ingenious‡ composition as is manifested in his parables.

Nor under this head are *extended* parables the only subjects that claim our attention. We should not omit those shorter illustrations, by which our Lord's discourses are made engaging, lively, and impressive.

His Apostles, whose employment it would henceforth be to preach the gospel, he animates to rely on Divine Providence for reasonable supply of food and raiment: "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these‡." As a caution to his disciples against being deceived by false teachers, he suggests to them, "Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree

* But as it may not exceed the powers of the human mind, especially with the assistance of the Hebrew scriptures, to frame a rational system of religion and morality, the very superior excellence of what our Lord taught all its only a strong presumption, and not a decisive proof, that he was an ambassador of the Most High God.

Archbishop Newcome's "Observations on our Lord's Conduct," sect. 12. ch. 1. p. 59 edit 1795.

† Section 5. of chapter ii. in Archbishop Newcome's "Observations," is particularly recommended to the reader's notice.

‡ St. Matt. vi. 26—28, 29.

ut gravitate, an suavitate, elegantia, et nervis majore."

"De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum," Præl. 10.

Bp. Lowth, p. 126 edit. 3.

* We shall in vain search the treasures of ancient and modern learning for apologues equal in beauty to our Lord's parables.

Newcome, p. 89.

† See "Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting," by Abbé du Bos, vol. ii. c. 13. p. 54.

bring forth evil fruit*." The distinction between one, who should hear his doctrine to the salutary purposes of faith and amendment, and another on whom his exhortations would produce no such permanent effect, is marked by likening the former "unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock;" the latter, "unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand†." That the Jews had resorted to John the Baptist in full persuasion and acknowledgement of his prophetic character, is intimated by these questions: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment‡?" That acts of mercy and compassion on all days and seasons may lawfully be exercised towards mankind, is to be inferred from these words: "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out§?" That the paternal love of God towards sinful man, moved him to reclaim from wickedness those that were gradually withdrawing themselves to a wider distance from Divine favour, we may hence infer; "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountain, and seeketh that which is gone astray||?" The semblance of holiness, which the Scribes and Pharisees ostentatiously assumed, whilst their hearts hute corresponded with their external profession, made them "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness¶." Anxious solicitude and tender affection cannot be expressed in stronger terms than in this pathetic exclamation: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not**!" The approaching end of Jeru-

salem might be collected from certain signs, as the annual change of the season from the appearance of a tree: "Learn the parable of the fig-tree: when its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh*." Perseverance is inculcated in this short aphorism: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God†." The disproportion of preachers, compared with the number of hearers, is expressed by "the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few‡." A pure heart is to our moral conduct, what perfect sight is to our natural frame. The one prompts to virtuous actions; the other guides our steps in proper directions. This truth is conveyed in a manner peculiarly beautiful: "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light: but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness§." Exposed as they would be to violent persecution, the disciples, before they embraced the gospel, were required to consider the degree of fortitude with which they could encounter dangers and difficulties. They were in this, as in common concerns of life, to act with due deliberation and forecast: "Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" "Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand||." Christianity is planted under Divine appointment, to the intent that all should produce fruits of virtue and holiness. To represent this purpose and effect of his religion, the expression of our Lord is, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman¶." In the exercise and establishing of real sanctity, there is a spiritual union of design and co-operation, originating in

* St. Matt. vi. 16, 17. † Ibid. vii. 24—26.
‡ Ibid. xi. 7, 8. § Ibid. xii. 11.
|| Ibid. xviii. 12. ¶ Ibid. xxiii. 27.
** Ibid. xxiii. 37.

* St. Matt. xxiv. 32. † St. Luke, ix. 62.
‡ St. Luke, x. 2. § Ibid. xi. 34, 35.
|| St. Luke, xiv. 28—31.
¶ St. John, xv. 1.

God, promoted by Christ, and influencing the hearts of all those who are devoted to the cause of Christian faith and Christian morals. This perfect concurrence of will and endeavour, our Lord intimates by saying of himself and his disciples, "I am the vine; ye are the branches*." Not the Jews only, but the whole race of mankind, were objects of Christ's compassion, and were to receive benefits † from his death and passion. His concern for the salvation of all men he describes, when he asserts of himself, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd ‡."

On a review of these and other similar illustrations, which were not studied and occasional, but unpremeditated and frequent; apart from all religious considerations, taste and genius would demand it of any reader to confess honestly, that such instances of fertile invention and pertinent application§, so interwoven

* St. John, xv. 5.

† See Dr. Macknight's Essay VII. sect. 1. paragraph 5. "On the Mediation of Christ;" in his "New Translation," vol. ii. p. 442. edit. with original text.

‡ St. John x. 11—16.

§ The illustrations of our Lord are singularly proper, not only as they illumine the immediate subject, but because in general they are borrowed from circumstances with which the Jews were conversant. "Præcipua erat omnibus occupatio in colendis terris et oulando pecore; agricolarum et pastorum ferè natio erat." "Itaque non mirum est si Hebræi scriptores multi sunt in deducendis metaphoris ex his potissimum artibus, in quibus ferè nutriti et educati sunt; si quæ animis oculisque eorum maxime observarentur, ea derivarent in poesin." Bp. Lowth's Psal. 7. Change but the terms, and the words are applicable to the illustrations of our Lord, and the audience which heard them. "The discourses, sayings, and parables, even so late as in the gospels, are suited to such a people, and abound with allusions to husbandry, and to the objects with which men are most acquainted in a country life." See Dr. Jortin's Serm. IX. vol. v. p. 185, 186. ed. 1772. Concerning these, and other "Beauties which occur in our Lord's Discourses," see part. 1. ch. ii. sect. 5. of Archbp. Newcome's "Observations on our Lord's conduct;" in which work, whoever con-

in familiar conversation as to make a principal and considerable part of it, must have proceeded from talents very seldom imparted to man.

* But if it be evident that he was so extraordinary in mental endowments, one consequence of great weight indisputably follows; it is this; a person of understanding so very superior to the generality of men, would never have exposed himself to persecution and death among his own countrymen, unless for the purpose of accomplishing some great end that should be adequate to the loss of every earthly comfort, and even of life itself. It could not be reconciled even with common prudence, much less with uncommon abilities, to suppose that Christ would endure the bitterest sufferings for no other object than a popularity which could have been but of short continuance, and which infallibly must have been forfeited immediately after his death, had his pretensions been unfounded, and his predictions not true. To have thus acted, would not have been the conduct of a mind guided by the plainest sense: surely then it could not have been the case with Christ, who is acknowledged to have been enlightened with superior wisdom. He, who was the * brightest ornament of philosophy, was zealous in a cause which he deemed of more importance than any concern in this world; namely, the introducing of good morals; and to this work he devoted his life. It is but fair then to allow, that Christ also must have had in view some cause, in which he was zealous, and which he thought more important than life, since to it he resigned himself as a voluntary sacrifice. If the one as is never disputed, died in testimony of morality, in candour it should be indisputable that the other also died in testimony of revealed truth. If credit for sincerity be given the one, by parity of reason the same credit cannot

templates the character of our Lord, will be reminded of Cicero's words; "Quod si ipsam Honestatem undique perfectam et absolutam, rem unam præclarissimam omnium maximèque laudandam, penitus viderent, quoniam gaudio complerentur!" Cic. de Fin. 5. 24, copied from Plato's Phædrus.

* Socrates.

be withholden from the other. The word of Christ then must be true: and that word declares "He came to give his life a ransom* for many;" and "that the world† through him might be saved?"

All however that has been said on the capacity with which Christ might have been gifted as a mere man, can be applicable to him only as a teacher by moral precepts and parables *not* prophetic; it cannot apply to him when he *prophesies* either by parables, or by more direct predictions. No force of understanding, in mere man not endued with Divine prescience, can so penetrate futurity, as to mark out distinctly, clearly, and circumstantially, events, which at the time when the prophet is foretelling them do not appear likely to happen. But thus distinctly, clearly, and circumstantially did Christ mark out events not probable to human conjecture; viz. his own crucifixion, and the destruction of Jerusalem. We must therefore ascribe that fore-knowledge to a higher cause than human understanding; even to Divine communication‡; since that confessedly is the sole cause competent to such an effect, and the only source from which revelation of transactions inscrutable by human sagacity can possibly be derived. Christ then was enlightened by Divine inspiration.

Now, though to us who have seen the accomplishment of his prophecies, inspiration does of itself afford a most convincing proof that Christ was sent from God; yet the argument thence arising is irrefragably strengthened by the additional consideration of his miracles. Miracles, wrought for salutary purposes, entitle the worker of them to our confidence in his veracity. For, beneficial miracles cannot be worked without Divine co-operation§: and a holy God cannot

co-operate in the effecting of miracles*, to attest assertions not true. But the Scriptures declare, that for the relief of the distressed, and in confirmation of his veracity, Christ continually† performed astonishing miracles; and they affirm him to have been "approved of God, in the wonders, and signs, which God did by him‡," and by which it was manifest that "God was with him§." When therefore Christ in express terms tells us, that "he came to give his life a ransom for many," and "that the world through him might be saved," we know from the nature of the Divine attributes that he spake truth: for had he not spoken truth, he had not been enabled to work the miracles which he evidently did perform.

But if inspiration and miracles evince the truth of Christ as to the object of his mission, he must be true in all other respects; for Divine confirmation, like the power of suspending the laws of nature, could be given to no one, who would speak contrary to truth in any instance whatever||. True then is Christ when concerning himself he asserts, that "He had glory with the Father, before the world was¶;" that "He came down from Heaven**;" and that "all power was given him in heaven and in earth††."

That he made these declarations, we are assured by the same witnesses who heard his prophecies, and saw‡‡ his

* "The miracles wrought by the prophet shew that he is sent from God: but God is a God of truth; and therefore the words spoken by his messenger, as such, must be true."

Newcome's "Observations," edit. 1795. p. 318.

† "Add to this, that they (i. e. the miracles) were as extraordinary for number, as they were in their own nature; and therefore manifested an abiding power in him that did them."

S. CHANDLER, p. 131.

‡ Acts, ii. 22.

§ Acts, x. 38.

|| Cum divinis justitiæ ac sapientiæ adversetur, tam excellenti modo eum ornare, qui falsum in re tantâ commississet.

GROTIUS de Ver. Rel. Christ. 2. 7.

¶ St. John, xvii. 5.

** St. John, iii. 13.

†† St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

‡‡ "No one proposition in nature is more evidently true than this; that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived and died in Judea; and if we allow this, we must farther acknowledge, that he led an excellent life, taught admirable lessons of morality; and we must also be forced to believe—"

* St. Matt. xx. 28. † St. John, iii. 17.

‡ See Newcome's "Observations," p. 289. ed. 1795.

§ "It is not consistent with God's wisdom or goodness, to be himself the instrument of confirming any false pretences to divine authority and inspiration." See "Vindication of the Christian Religion," by SAMUEL CHANDLER, edit. 1725. p. 38. 64. 97.

miracles. That their testimony is to be received we have no doubt, because there could have existed no other judgment possible or conceivable for them to affirm these facts, if false; whereas there were many and weighty considerations, which might have influenced them either to deny or conceal the facts, though true. The witnesses then we believe credible; we admit therefore their record of our Lord's declarations; and on the ground of his own words by them recorded, we worship the Lord Jesus-Christ to the glory of God * the Father, who ordained the dispensation of which Christ is the dignified and divine conductor; a dispensation of mercy and benevolence in God the author, and in our Lord the finisher of our salvation.

From the remarks which have been offered to you, on the preaching of Christ; from the enquiries which have been made concerning the source of his wisdom; and from the consequences which arise in the investigation of that subject; result these conclusions.

1. As a moral instructor, Christ displayed a mind endued with very extraordinary and super-eminent powers.

2. As a prophet, he discovered the clearest indications of prescience far exceeding all human foresight.

3. As a worker of miracles, he gave ocular demonstration of his possessing Divine energy.

If we consider him in the first of these qualities; then, to imagine he would expose himself to a most painful death, for the sake of establishing an opinion not only untrue, but which in its falsehood, must be liable to detection within

the space of three days, is in the highest degree *improbable*, according to all the knowledge we have of common prudence in human action.

But if we regard him with a view to his other properties; then, to suppose he should claim to himself Divine honour without just pretensions, and yet at the same time be signally marked out by the ALMIGHTY as a prophet and a worker of beneficial miracles, is *impossible*, according to whatever ideas we can form of God's attributes either from natural or revealed religion.

It remains, therefore, that we acknowledge and receive CHRIST, under the exalted characters, which upon the authority of his own works and words the Scriptures assign him. As such, we do acknowledge and receive him. And remembering continually, that in the humiliation with which he left the glory of his Father and became man; in the wisdom with which he taught; in the miracles which he performed; in all the persecutions he experienced and the agonies he endured; in his death on the cross; in his marvellous resurrection; in his glorious ascension; in his effusion of spiritual gifts; remembering that in all these stupendous circumstances, CHRIST was actuated by love for the human race, and regard for the honour of God; was zealous that man should be more happy and God more glorified; by admiration of wisdom, benevolence, and goodness; by the ties of gratitude; by the duties of reverence; by the obligations of positive command; by the prospect of forming more virtuous habits in this life; by the hopes of attaining rational and spiritual happiness in a future state; impelled by all these motives we obey and worship CHRIST, as the SON of GOD, the Redeemer of man, the Saviour of the world, the LORD of all.

To HIM, with the FATHER, and the HOLY SPIRIT, by us who in obedience to our LORD's command were baptized in their name and dedicated to their service, be ascribed all praise and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now and ever! Amen.

further, viz. that he did many wonderful works in confirmation of them; because we have no other evidence for the truth of one than of the other." S. CHANDLER, p. 51. If we still proceed in the argument, we must admit that our Lord made concerning himself those declarations, which are ascribed to him; for we have the same evidence to prove that he made those declarations, as to prove that he wrought miracles, and that he lived in Judea. But the evidence in proof of all these points is so forcible and valid, that it is "the strongest evidence for the truth of facts that ever was, or can be given to the world."

S. CHANDLER, p. 51.

See Bp. Sharpe's vol. iv. Discourse I.

SERMON CLXIV.

BY VICESIMUS KNOX, D.D.

The Education of the Poor recommended.

JOHN viii. 12.

"I am the Light of the World."

Let there be light, was the first command of the Lord God Almighty, in the noblest exertion of his omnipotence. The glorious emanation, bursting from its orient fountains, instantly obeyed; and all nature, fresh from the hand of her Author, glowed with the beauty of variegated colour. But this primordial light, lovely though its appearance, and stupendous its essence, is still, we know, but a body created, physical and material. Another light there is, and a greater and a holier, of which the solar beam, all pure and radiant as it streams from the day-star, is but the emblem and the harbinger.

For hear the voice of our Saviour. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. In the vivid language of eastern metaphor, he styles himself the sun of the intellectual system, the luminary of the soul.

Light indeed is synonymous in Scripture with wisdom, knowledge, happiness, life; life spiritual, and life immortal: and darkness, in the same figurative language, implies ignorance, misery, and death; spiritual death, in the midst of animal life, and eternal death, when animal life is no more.

He indeed who made the sun, and commanded it thus to revolve for ever in its orbit, GOD HIMSELF, says the apostle, is LIGHT; and we are well assured, that the first adoration ever offered by man was to the sun; of all visible objects, the most strikingly illustrious, and most obviously beneficial. But as the sun is to the earth, to the visual faculties of animals, and to all things susceptible of its influence, such is Christ, such the spirit of the Holy One that inhabits eternity, to the soul of man; dispensing to it analogous benefits, producing on it analogous effects, dispelling its darkness, and vivifying,

with genial warmth, all its latent energy.

On the day of redemption, indeed, the FIAT of God operated no less graciously and powerfully than when, in the morning of the creation, the sun, for the first time, went forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiced, as a giant, to run his course.

For when the sun of righteousness arose, with healing in his wings, and the feet of him that brought glad tidings, appeared so beautiful on the mountains, how did he announce his dignity? *I am the light of the world.* It is a description truly sublime; beautiful in its imagery, and no less just than beautiful. Few are the words; but magnificent the style, and momentous the purport; such indeed as could proceed from the lips of him alone, the loftiness of whose nature enabled him to utter them with appropriate grace, and without the slightest semblance of vain glory.

That Christ is the sacred source of all spiritual illumination is thus plainly declared, and must be confessed by all his followers, with sentiments of wonder and gratitude. But the occasion, on which we are now assembled, requires that we view him as the world's great luminary in another sense; a sense most highly interesting to man, though in comparison, but secondary and subordinate. I mean that he is collaterally the copious source of the less perfect radiance, still, in a high degree luminous, which has flowed upon the world from the preservation of LEARNING in the dark ages; from the cultivation of science in times of barbarism; and from a partial attention to education, in some mode and measure, however confined and inadequate, amidst the shades of ignorance gross as universal.

For it is true (and the page of history will justify the assertion), that the learning, or the means of learning, which we now so amply possess, were preserved from total destruction, by circumstances peculiar to Christianity.

It is a curious but incontestable fact, that for ages after the sixth century, when all learning in Europe was enveloped in clouds, the Egyptian darkness was in some degree dispelled from church, and a dim religious light,

stantly preserved in the cloister. A pale tremulous flame, every where else extinguished, still glimmered through the aisles and faintly illumined the arches of the abbey. Feeble indeed were its rays, like those of a sepulchral lamp or a vapour in the charnel-house. It emitted a light scarcely more than darkness visible; yet still it preserved those scintillations, whose flame afterwards irradiated whole empires with its blaze. It quivered, like an expiring taper for a time, but at last kindled a torch which lighted up the avenues to education, and eventually became the *light of the world* in the diffusion of general knowledge, together with the peculiar radiance of revealed religion.

According to this view of the church and of ancient times, the highest learning and philosophy, even the *Organon* of our own Verulam, the system of our own Newton, the epics of our own Milton, all the advancements in polite learning and recondite science, originating in the excited energies of the human mind, may be traced to the light, preserved, during the dark ages, in the church, and in the church only; a light which was derived from the *sun of righteousness*, the star in the east; that star, which beamed over Bethlehem, at once a symbol of wisdom and a guidance to the wise.

To this religious light, encreasing as it advanced in our hemisphere, we confessedly owe not only the universities of this land, but the free grammar-schools founded in the great city and in almost every provincial town; and lastly, the parochial charity-schools; those seminaries of humble, but useful learning, which we are at this hour assembled, under the same auspicious light, to maintain, augment, and improve. Whatever names of institutors or supporters may appear sculptured on their mural tablets, or on the frontispiece of their portals; their corner stone, is Christianity; their founder, Jesus Christ; their benefactors, Christians; and their charter, the Gospel. Thus has the torch of learning kindled at the altar, been handed down, from age to age, unquenched by the barbarians of the north, whose savage fury devoted in

its march, whole libraries to the flames, and (if the church had not afforded an inviolable asylum), would have crushed with ruthless havoc, in one heap of ruin, all the remains of classical antiquity. The lustre indeed of learning, the elegance of the fine arts, the sublimity of science, had no charms in the eyes of *vandal* nations, and served but to upbraid them with the barbarity of their ignorance. Light was to them, as sunshine to the owl. Add to which, that *they loved darkness, because their deeds were evil*.

But the CHURCH secured the sacred posit in her shrine, and saved the time-honoured rolls of wisdom, art, and science, under the veil of the temple. In the CHURCH, during times most auspicious to the progress of knowledge, some degree of education was always necessary to qualify the lowest functionaries round the altar, even the puerile attendants on the priests, for the regular performance of the ritual and liturgical service. Thus in ages most unfavourable to literary acquirements, there existed in the cathedral, the monastery, and the convent, petty schools for the instruction of young Acolytes (as they were called), instruction in reading always, and in writing often; those humble attainments which were necessary to the choral chaunt, and the responses of a prescribed formula. Attached to religious houses was usually a repository of manuscripts, and an office termed the *scriptorium*, where copies of the best classics, as well as legends of the worst superstition, were not only transcribed laboriously, accurately, and sometimes most beautifully; but illuminated with the brightest colours and most delicate touches of the pencil; and it may be observed, by the way, that the practice of illuminating manuscripts, greatly promoted the fine art of painting, an art which had no inconsiderable influence in the advancement of intellectual proficiency, and the promotion of polite literature.

These conventual offices constituted a kind of eleemosynary schools, usually appendant to the church and to religious houses, and afforded a partial education; the education of young ecclesiastics, who in process of time carried the lamp, which

they had lighted at the altar, into the busy walks of life, and among the circles of laic and civil society. Thus illumined in the sanctuary and the cloister, they unavoidably imparted some rays of holy light to all the labyrinths of many-coloured life. Ecclesiastics (because few others were qualified), exclusively presided over the department of education; as they continue to preside over it at this hour, by the voluntary choice and deference of the laity. The knowledge acquired in the professional study of theology, opened the avenues to general science; and the Christian religion became the nursing mother of learning as well as of virtue.

So justly and characteristically did the great luminary of Christendom predicate of himself *I am the light of the world*; and doubtless he who gave the light, evinced by the very act, his intention that it should be imparted by the receivers, as means and opportunity might occur, or be procured. Doubtless the gracious Being who said *let there be light*, has made it our bounden duty to co-operate with his benign intentions, in communicating whatever light we may enjoy to those of our fellow-creatures who still sit in darkness, benighted in the recesses of obscure and lowly life, where poverty hides her head in shame; and ignorance, all unconscious, too often reposes in a lethargic and deadly slumber.

It has pleased the *father of lights* (as our *father in heaven* is frequently styled), that man should exercise the virtue of charity in acting, on many occasions, to his fellow man, as a superior and tutelary being; but particularly, in dispensing the light of knowledge; a gift which enriches the receiver without diminution of the donor's share. If is, we may assuredly conclude, the high behest of our Creator, and the declared will of our Redeemer, that the spiritual and intellectual sun which rose at the creation, and broke forth, with added splendour at the redemption, should *shine more and more until the perfect day*, and in due time illuminate the universe. It was clearly the edict of Omnipotence, "Let there be light" spiritual as well as natural; and man contravene the command of

power irresistible, acting under the impulse of mercy infinite? Greatly is it to be deplored, that some among the sons of men have exhibited signs of an audacity presumptuous; have endeavoured to veil the eyes of the poor from the sight of things belonging to their peace; have contended, with all their ingenuity, to prevent the sun of righteousness from shining on the cottage of labour, and cheering, with its warmth, the chill abode of unprotected indigence.

And these are they who calumniate the institution, and oppose the encouragement of charity-schools; representing our efforts to diffuse knowledge among the poor by parochial, national, and eleemosynary education, as incompatible with political wisdom, and dangerous to the state.

It is scarcely worth while to discuss all the objections which the narrow views of cold-hearted, statistical writers have suggested against the charity schools of this benevolent country. The greatest stress is laid on two; which we may briefly consider, though at the hazard of abusing your patience. First, say they, the education of the poor encourages idleness by rendering them disinclined to labour; secondly, it disturbs the arrangements of society by confounding the ranks of regular subordination.

As to the first objection, that knowledge causes in the poor an aversion to labour, do the poor then, in their uninstructed state, labour from choice? Have they not already, with the feelings common to all mankind, an aversion to toil and trouble; and, if they could, would they not, like others, live a life of comparative ease? Is labour their favourite pastime, their dear delight, an exercise willingly taken for health and pleasure, like the rural sports of ranks more elevated? Is it joyous to spend the toilsome hours in the perpetual night of a mine? To turn the wheel in the manufactory from morning till evening without a prospect of cessation or variety? To bear on their shoulders the heavy burdens of merchandize? To sweat at the anvil or the plough? No, certainly; for man, when he feels no spur, stimulating him to action, is naturally inclined to bask in the sun.

and pass his hours either in the repose of indolence, or in some selected mode of pleasant activity. He assured that hard and constant labour, the labour of a life, is always the effect of necessity alone, imperious, unrelenting necessity. The poor labour that they may eat, they labour that they may be clothed, they labour that they may be sheltered by a roof from the inclemency of the climate. Necessary are all the objects of their labour to their bare existence. Will the daily want of food, of raiment, or of shelter be removed, by an ability acquired in the charity schools, to read the Bible, or even to write their own names, and calculate their little earnings and expenditure? Labour they must, as they did before they learned their alphabet, and were qualified to spell out, on the repose of the sabbath, or at the close of the week-day, their Prayer-book, their Testament, their Catechism, or their Whole Duty of Man. Labour they must, as they did before, they had learned by heart their duty towards God, and their duty towards their neighbour; yes, they must labour still, or they have this alternative: they must even starve, be clothed in rags, and find not where to lay their heads. The alphabet affords no substitute for bread, or raiment, or a roof for shelter and repose. Nor will a book, however good, or however well they may know how to use it, supersede the labour of the loom, the plough, the spade, and the axe. With the highest improvement which these humble schools of charity can give them, they must, at the call of nature, and under the pressure of want, submit with patience to the iron hand of necessity. And the better they are taught the lessons of religion, the more cheerfully are they likely to submit. For the improvement of their reason, the melioration of their disposition, and their awakened sense of moral rectitude, will induce them to discharge with less reluctance than before, the severest duties incumbent on their allotted state. They will probably, when trained to habits of piety, labour more abundantly, because they will feel the solace of religious hope, mitigating the pain of toil, cheering the long hours of confinement, and

sweetening the intervals of liberty and leisure.

Experience has indeed removed the first objection. For in the northern division of this island all the poor are, and have long been educated, in parochial schools, with a strict attention to morality and religion. And can the united kingdom exhibit examples more uniformly excellent than those of the natives of the north, either of sobriety, industry, or submission to authority? How rarely are they convicted at the tribunal, how rarely, as victims of the law, do they suffer death, or pain, or disgrace? All of them can read, and most of them do read from choice (reading furnishing them with one favourite mode of spending their days pleasantly), and all, at the same time, are able and willing to labour, as their fortunate employers can testify, with additional skill, contentment, and alacrity, in consequence of a virtuous and pious education. Their reason improved by early culture and their sober habits of thinking, cause them to be convinced of the necessity of their humble station, and to deem happiness perfectly compatible, as it certainly is, with honest, healthy, and industrious poverty. They feel indeed the evils of indigence; but bear them with pious and cheerful resignation to the will of that God, whom they have learned in infancy to adore. None, at the same time, are more eager to advance themselves in the ranks of life, and none do advance themselves more frequently by those virtues which recommend them to their superiors; the principles and habits of which were acquired at the places of parochial education.

And have we not in the example of the northern Britons, an incontestible proof of the utility, even in a political sense, of national or universal instruction? Have we not an attestation, under the seal of experience, that the exertions of the labourer, and the ingenuity of the mechanic are not impeded or diminished; but promoted by teaching them to read and write? And since the results of experience must ever supersede the most subtle speculations of theory, the first question, appears to be unanswerably decided.

Painful and invidious would it be, to compare the effects of neglected education among the poor natives of our sister island, a brave and generous race, furnished by nature with keen sensibility and ardent genius, but sometimes barbarized and brutalized, through the defect of early discipline. Who but must weep over these forlorn children of want, when, blinded by ignorance, and seduced by passion, they fall victims to the laws of their country; ever ready as they are, to stand foremost in her battles, and bleed in her defence. The contrast of this neighbouring island with the northern parts of our own, is striking; and the difference in the state of the common people is sufficient to repel every attack of that sophistry which insinuates, that to enlighten the lower classes, is to encourage idleness, with all its consequent vice and woe.

And with respect to the second objection, which asserts that to educate the poor is to disturb subordination; it is true indeed, that, before the discovery of that most important art, the art of printing, the highest orders of society, in this, and all other countries of Europe, were grossly illiterate. It is true that, to have taught the lower orders to read, at that inauspicious period, might, in the natural course of things, have had a tendency to revolution. In point of knowledge, the rich and great would have been inferior to the poor and lowly; and since knowledge is power, the *confe* (to which a well arranged community has been compared), might have been inverted. But under the present circumstances of Europe, no such effect can result from instructing the poor universally. By the diffusion of knowledge, consequent on the typographical invention, the whole fabric of society has been elevated. Therefore the poor stand higher than they did before; but they still form the basis of the pyramid. The regular gradation to the *apex* is not, in the smallest degree, disturbed. The poor man is elevated positively, but not relatively; and so, in exact proportion, is the rich man. Both have risen together, lifted up with the whole frame. The base is not raised from its own proper and subordinate place; but the platform it-

self, the area, the united pile, is exalted above its antient level. The pedestal is not altered either by elongation or transposition. The Corinthian column still towers in all its beauty, majesty, and altitude. The Doric and Tuscan stand below, plain yet massy. The extreme ranks do not approximate. The rich and poor indeed, as God appointed, do occasionally meet together, for many wise purposes, yet in the arrangements of social order, they remain distant and distinct, at their just, natural, and appropriate interval. The fabric is still firm; its solidity increased by accessions to its magnificence; and the stability of the capital secured by added breadth and gravity at the foundation.

It seems indeed probable, that the more *MIND* there is in any free nation, the more intellect in the mass of the people, the stronger will be the whole social edifice, from the subterraneous cell, up to the cloud-capt dome; for instead of such materials as *hay* and *strubble* (to use the scriptural expressions), its beams will be of oak, its bars of iron, and its walls of marble. *MIND* is the basis of all permanent power; and woe to the potentate who expects lasting security from the tottering props of plebeian ignorance. He builds, like the fool, on the sand, who erects a dynasty on the superstition, the prejudices, or the passions of a populace grossly ignorant, and therefore easily misguided and urged to deeds of frenzy.

And so much for the second objection to charity schools, which originates in an idea that they weaken empire and endanger tranquillity by disturbing subordination. "Pride," it has been well observed, "is not founded on the improvement of the understanding, but on the weakness and defects of it. None are prouder, "than the most foolish of the animals around us; and, it is ignorance of what is better, which makes men suppose they are possessed of all excellence."

But why should I fatigue attention by enumerating, or confuting the cavils of minute philosophers and petty politicians, who pretend, and have asserted, that none of our charitable institutions are consistent with an enlightened policy? What is this policy? It is at best but a worldly

policy, which in this instance, Christian wisdom repudiates with disdain. Even as a worldly policy I think it erroneous. And how, as they pretend, is it enlightened? Not surely by the light which flows from the great luminary of Christianity, from the sacred lamp at the altar; but by the false fire, the *ignis fatuus* of vanity; or, the factitious phosphor of atheistical philosophy; a philosophy, which idolizes matter, and falls down in adoration of nature in preference to its Author.

Let us beware also of that narrow system of modern times which would govern men in society on principles of mere calculation; which appreciates human life at a low rate, and is ready to sacrifice millions at the unhallowed shrines of avarice and ambition. Among the recent refinements of a godless wisdom is that which considers the Lord of the creation merely as a sensitive machine, with eyes, arms, hands, and fingers, formed to manufacture some commodity or luxury, saleable in the emporiums of commerce; merely as an animated engine, to be worked at the will of opulence and power, for pecuniary emolument; merely as a breathing mill, or animal automaton, which cannot stand still a moment, for the purposes of moral and religious discipline, without irreparable loss of time and unpardonable waste of wealth: a political delinquency, in the estimate of the modern sophist and statistical calculator, more culpable and heinous than any infringement of the decalogue.

Such policy, such a principle, such a philosophy has no credit, no weight, no influence on a Christian auditory, before whom, to mention is to condemn, to describe, is to explode and reject it. The wealth of nations in a Christian's estimate is the goodness, the probity, the virtuous industry, and useful knowledge, amongst individuals, high and low, rich and poor, who constitute the grand aggregate of a rational community. The mind is the man; and doubtless the best bulwark of a country, is the noble spirit of a sound, virtuous, religious people, duly informed by a competent education, and effectually restrained from all injustice and enormity, by the fear of God, and a Christian conscience.

Truth and reason, under all existing circumstances, are great, and will endure, as well as prevail. These form the columns of society, and like a rock of adamant, will stand the violence of the waves, and defy the corrosions of time, and the shocks of casualty. But how can truth and reason exist in the mass of the people without knowledge? and how can knowledge become general and pervade the whole body without national education, furnished to the poor by eleemosynary bounty, as it is to the rich, by their own voluntary choice and personal assiduity?

Consistently with this conviction, and acting with the sound policy of the *children of light*, you have persevered, notwithstanding the plausibility of objections, in patronizing, improving, and augmenting your charity-schools. Consistently with your persuasion, as members of the church of England, you have been zealous that the national schools, as well as the parochial, should be conducted according to the principles, doctrines, and discipline of the established religion. Charity schools, whether parochial or national, you are aware, are the porch, and the vestibule, either to the church or the conventicle. You deem it of most momentous importance to the church, that the direct avenues to it should be made smooth and clean, and light and pleasant. If the entrances to the sanctuary of the establishment are neglected, or unilluminated, you are justly apprehensive, that the imbecility of youth may be seduced from the paths of peace and sober piety into the wilderness of fanatical error; and lost in labyrinths, where discordant guides, often differing no less from each other than from the church, might lead the poor wanderer through the thorns of perplexity to the whirlpools of madness and despair.

Consistently and kindly you hold out a lantern to the church, and let your light shine before the feet of the young pilgrim in his progress to the sanctuary; the seat of rational piety, the school of sound instruction; the standard of a light which illuminates without dazzling; the receptacle of a fire which warms without burning; the dispenser of a heat which cherishes the vital principle, without danger of a morbid calenture.

Sound religion, you well know, is equally removed from the extremes of a chilling rigor and an ardent fever. And happily our church, in addition to its advantages in disseminating a sound religion with a pure morality, is wisely adapted to the nature and genius of our civil constitution. It is highly favourable to public tranquility. It is an impregnable rampart not only against infidelity, atheism, and fanaticism, but against sedition, tumult, and insubordination. It allows and favours freedom of discussion; while it preserves for the common good, an authority necessary to prevent confusion and all the evil works of anarchical misrule. It is built on the foundation of the Scriptures, the prophets, and the apostles; *Jesus Christ being the head corner stone*. Therefore we must love our church; therefore we must defend our church; and defend it with a zeal no less ardent, than that which we display for the constitution of the state; that free and wise system of our forefathers, which has rendered our island the pride and ornament of civil society. And how can we defend it more effectually than by educating our youth in its doctrines? Yet in the utmost ardour of affection for both church and state, the spirit of christianity demands that we support our own institutions with all the mildness of moderation, all the forbearance of philanthropy, without bitterness, without hypocrisy, *speaking the truth in love*, and maintaining our own conviction of rectitude with every indulgence that may consist with wisdom, to human error and fallibility.

With a natural attachment to the church, of which we are members, we come forward at this juncture, not only to support our old charity schools, but to augment their numbers and improve their plan; by adopting the newly discovered modes of facilitation, expedition, and economy, imported under happy auspices, from an eastern clime; that clime, from which light of every kind, natural, intellectual, and spiritual first beamed on mortal man, wandering and lost in the shades of ignorance. As churchmen, we cannot but favour a system which favours our own church; the church of our fathers, the church of our children and families, the church of our

country; a great and glorious church, richly adorned with sanctity and learning, with temples most magnificent, with all appendages adequate to its use and ornament, and become even more venerable, and if possible, more hallowed, from the circumstances of long duration and high antiquity. As churchmen, we must patronize a system which instructs the youth of our nation in the catechism of our excellent liturgy, and which conducts them to that place of worship, where our own children were initiated by baptism, and which we ourselves, from choice and for conscience sake, frequent, as often as we assemble to pour forth our praises and thanksgivings to Almighty God, and to hear the words of sound, sober, and scriptural instruction.

In schools superintended by a church, which discourages the extravagance of enthusiasm, soberness of mind will be taught; and soberness of mind is essential to the permanency of all religious principle. Without it, religion becomes insanity; and its votaries, under the effects of a disordered imagination, too often, instead of a school and a church, require the discipline of the physician, and the manacles of an hospital.

It is to be hoped that the spirit of party will never interrupt these labours of love. Charity rejoices that good is done, and is not forward to depreciate the deed or the doer of it, from schismatical prejudice; and therefore the christian philanthrope will not oppose the national instruction of the church catechism. How indeed can we train up the youth of the nation better, than by teaching them, in the words of the catechism, "to love, honour, and succour their father and mother, to honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him; to hurt nobody by word or deed; to be true and just in all their dealings, to keep their hands from picking and stealing, and their tongues from lying and slandering; to keep their body in soberness and chastity; not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour to get their own living, and do their duty in that state of life, to which it shall please God to call them." Can we, I ask, teach them in any better manner than by words like these; founding all their moral

virtues on the love of God, on obedience to Christ, and on reverence for law and order, human and divine.

To give the poor children this sort of education, to inspire them with the fear of God, and to afford them the means of learning every thing that is honest and of good report, you are now assembled; and for the promotion of your purpose, a purpose recommended by patriotism, by Christianity, by the example of our grand national institution, and indeed of the united kingdom, I stand this day the delegated petitioner of your bounty. But solicitation is superfluous. Your bounty has, I see, by the annual subscriptions flowed, and will continue to flow, with spontaneous exuberance. It would be a violation of the respect due to a congregation, avowedly assembled for the purpose of charitable contribution, to weary you with importunity, or prescribe to your munificence. You want not the impulse of argument and persuasion to extort the reluctant pittance of a cold, formal decency, the scanty dole of the parsimonious hand which grudges while it gives. The happy return of peace and plenty at this moment will probably cause a peculiar expansion of heart, and kindle a more than common glow of benevolence. Our country, amidst the wreck of nations around, has shone forth with undiminished lustre, as the land of liberty, the land of learning, sound philosophy, pure religion, and on this occasion I may add with peculiar triumph, the land of charity; of charity which no privations of long and severe adversity could impede or confine. Our country, in consequence of her steady adherence to religion, in faith and practice, lifts up her head among the nations, the pride and boast of humanity, the glory, the envy, the defence of Europe; nor can I for a moment fear, lest her lustre should be ever tarnished, on occasions like these, by an ill-timed parsimony. You will as patriots, no less than Christians (as far as such an occasion will allow), adorn the triumphs of her valour with the trophies of benevolence. You gave largely to foreigners in distress; but at the same time forgot not the child of poverty at your own doors, who was perishing through lack of knowledge, and on

whom the light of the Gospel had scarcely emitted a ray, though all around him was illuminated. You saw the poor vagabond in the streets of the great city. The world knew him not. The world turned from him with disgust. But you recognized him as a brother. You remembered, that in the most forlorn outcast and abject, (squalid and deplorable though his exterior,) there is an immortal spirit, which we hope one day may be a partaker with ourselves in a state of glory, of consummate intelligence, of mutual kindness, of exalted felicity. Rough, forbidding, perhaps offensive is the guise of the ragged, famished, wretched; yet is there a jewel within, a pearl of price, which, with your aid will be disengaged from its incrustation, and prepared to shine, in the light of Christ, with all its primeval brilliancy.

And even in this sublunary state, the effects of education in raising poor persons to great eminence and public utility, have been wonderful. The most illustrious characters in arts and arms, have arisen, from the darkest, lowest, vale of obscurity. They have sprung with elastic force to extraordinary heights in consequence of native strength, called forth by early culture. Fenced from injury at first, they have risen and towered above their equals, by the hardihood acquired in a chill soil; and, like the oak of the forest, or the pine on the mountain, vegetated with luxuriance in the bleakest exposure and the wildest solitude. Adversity has indeed been found often favourable to virtue. Many examples might be cited from the pages of biography. Our gracious Lord himself, we know, was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and the luminary of the world had been at once, and for ever extinguished, if the pride and prejudice of man could have prevailed against the will of the Almighty. But the crown of thorns, which the insolence of authority bound round his bleeding brow, became a more splendid ornament than a diadem of jewels; the dove, a more triumphant standard than the Roman eagle; and the cross, lifted up on high, an ensign more glorious than the banner, crimsoned with gore, which waved in the

wind, to emblazon a Caesar's victory. Humble as was the birth of the carpenter's son, mean as the manger that cradled him, dark and dismal as the hour of his crucifixion, he it was who *ascended on high, and led captivity captive*. He it was who became, what he styled himself, the light of the world, and dispensed those rays, which, under your charitable administration, may lighten the path of these little ones, not only to useful and creditable employments and stations, in this world, but to a consummation of bliss in realms of light and glory; the light of God's countenance, and the glory of immortal life. And is good so great to be done by any deed of ours this day, and this hour, before we separate? How sweet must be the satisfaction, how serene and exquisite the joy of a well-disposed mind, to consider that the donation of a little superfluity, will contribute to a purpose so extensively, so sublimely, so divinely beneficial. How sleeps the kind-hearted man, lulled on his pillow with the soothing reflection, that he has not lost a day by losing an opportunity to do good to some poor unfortunate fellow-creature; but that he has humbly co-operated with his Lord and Saviour, in a work of love and mercy, and mitigated, in one instance, the sorrows of suffering humanity.

To a mind so disposed, it must be consolatory to reflect, that a grand effort, an effort unprecedented in the history of the world, is now made in our own distinguished country, to advance the happiness of the poor, and indeed to enlighten the understanding, and meliorate the morals of the human race. The poor have now the Gospel preached to them, by the instrumentality of the press, by the universal distribution of the Scriptures, and by national schools, in a manner, and to an extent, unparalleled at any previous period, since the light of the world first burst on chaos, in the morning of creation. The result of such labours of love, operating universally, must, at some future period, become stupendously beneficial. Christ declared himself the light of the world; and it has been reserved (in the unsearchable ways of Providence), for the age in which we exist to diffuse that light, in our own country, to the remotest corners and the darkest recesses, in which, *penury and ignorance lie*

helplessly enveloped. The *sun* may be pronounced (when we take a view of the multiplied public charities around, and consider the vigorous efforts of laity and clergy combined), the jubilee of Christian benevolence. And shall any one here assembled not be emulous to take a part in this work, and unambitious to become an instrument in the hand of heaven, in communicating the light which he himself perhaps has amply enjoyed from his infancy, in consequence of more favourable opportunities, and the advantages afforded by competency, not only for a useful, but a liberal education.

Is there one among us who will avow that he wishes not to share in the generous contest of beneficence? But why ask the question? The deeds of charity, already recorded in the rolls of annual subscription, demonstrate your zeal in the cause, and remove all doubt of your liberality in its support. I have already said I need not importune you. I cannot for a moment, distrust that generosity, on which your voluntary attendance at this hour, (as you were well aware of the occasion,) justifies, or rather demands, a full and unqualified reliance.

I can only venture to urge (and this also may be unnecessary), that you be careful to act, in dispensing your bounty, from a motive purely evangelical. Manage not so ill, as to be bountiful and at the same time uncharitable. Paradoxical as it may appear, the case is possible, and, it may be feared, not uncommon. To avoid it, let us pray that our hearts may be filled with grace, while our hands are extended in munificence. This is to be charitable to our own souls, while we give to others pecuniary assistance. This is to consecrate our gift to God, and to secure the favour of him, whose mercy the most opulent of us all must one day supplicate, with all the earnestness of abject mendicity.

May then the Holy Spirit influence with his affectionate energies all who are here assembled, and give them grace, not only to promote the good work, but to promote it, from the true Christian principle, which is *faith working by love*.

How significant the words! *Faith working by love!* Mark them, ponder

them. They form an epitome of the whole doctrine of Christian charity, and may serve as a test and touchstone to assay the sincerity of our virtue.

Such a faith, actuated and acting by such a love will unbar the gates of light, that glorious light which streams from the world's great luminary, and co-operate with THE FATHER OF LIGHTS in pouring its beams on all the sons and daughters of want; guiding their feet through the shadowy vale of ignorance,

labour, and sorrow, to realms of everlasting rest, along the safe, luminous, and pleasant path of piety and peace. Such a faith, actuated and acting by such a love, will cause the sun of righteousness to shine over their, and our own prospects of futurity, and open to the view of all, those regions of glory, to which the only infallible guide is charity; CHARITY, OUT OF A PURE HEART, AND OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE, AND OF FAITH UNFEIGNED.

FINIS.

